May bliss be in your heart
at the break of day of the New Year

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Monday, January 1, 2007 ★ 6 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 24 P18 Website: inquirer.net

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By Christine O. Avendaño and Leila B. Salaverria

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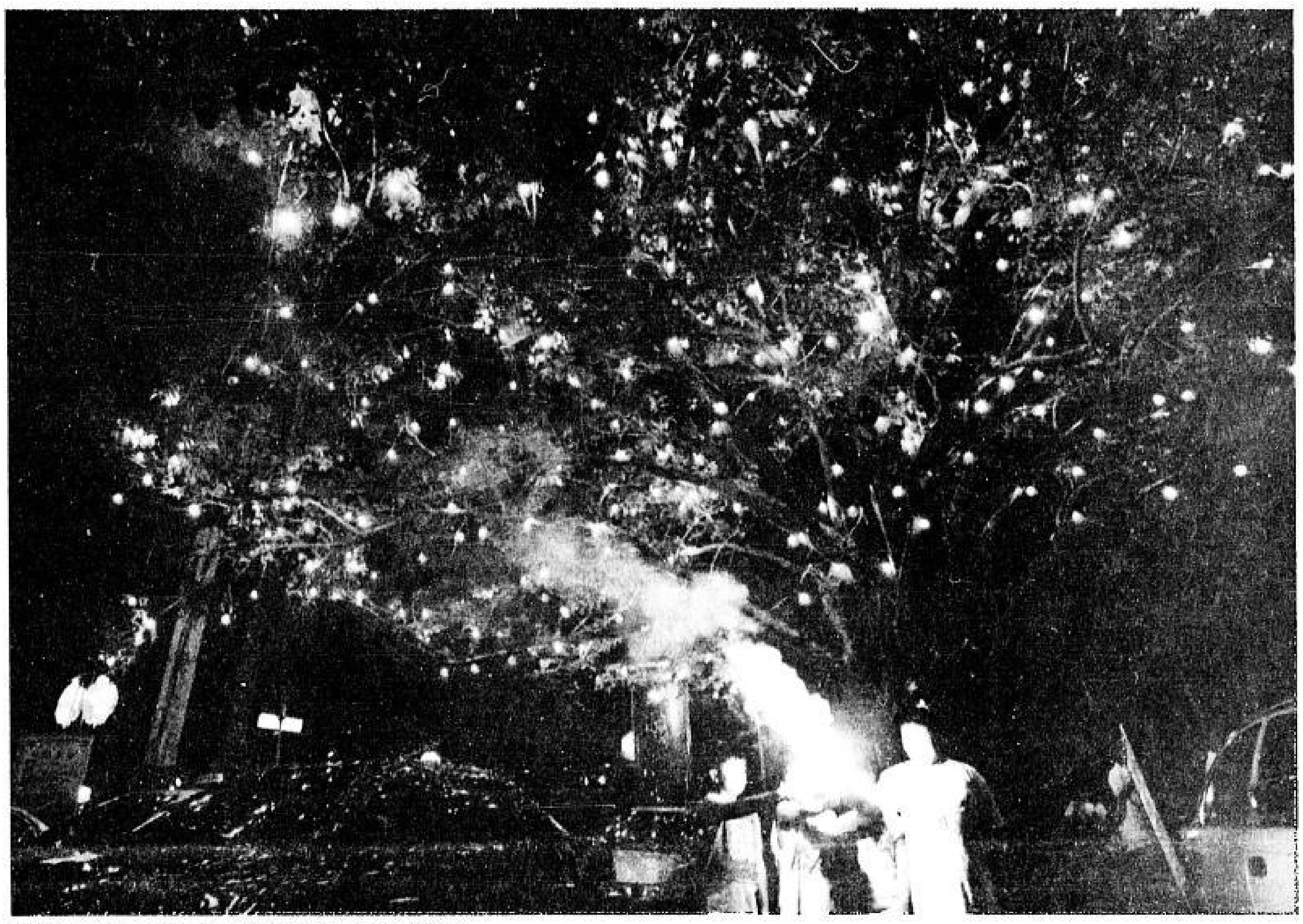
Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez denied the handover came about

GMA SUPPORTS/ A6



LET THERE BE LIGHT, NOT A BIG BANG
Under a glowing tree, cousins Bryant, Irvin, Kyla Marie and Aaron along Roxas Boulevard welcome 2007 with gentle sparklers that light up their faces as bright as the hopes that the New Year brings. It is the safe way, the only way to greet many more new years to come. BOY CABRIDO

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SADDAM/ A4

Economic gains branded an illusion

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Analysts say that much of what has been achieved has been done for the benefit of international creditors and the credit-rating agencies, with little progress made on health, education and public infrastructure.

"The economic picture is an illusion," Ben Diokno, an economist with the University of

ECONOMIC/ A6

2007 Year of the Fire Boar: Clash of fire, water

TAYO ANG BAHALA SA SWERTE NATIN!

By Abigail L. Ho

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But that doesn't mean that the coming Year of the Fire Boar, which starts on Feb. 18, will be an uneventful one.

2007 YEAR/ A4

SAFE TERRAIN

Bicol GK homes withstood 'Reming'

By Volt Contreras

OF THE DEVASTATION THAT THE killer Typhoon "Reming" visited on Bicol, no deaths and injuries were reported from the 48 communities that the Gawad Kalinga had set up around the region.

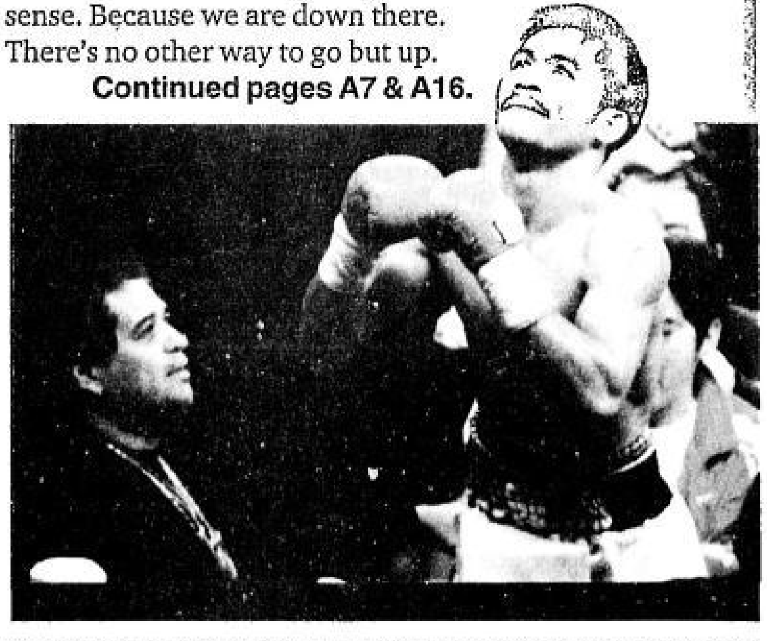
According to GK executive director Antonio Meloto, this was because the pastel-colored GK neighborhoods stood on safe, scientifically chosen terrain despite the structures themselves being built at low cost and in part by volunteer labor.

Looking back at a year of major calamities, the founder of one of the country's most successful housing programs for the poor said the storms of 2006 may have demonstrated one simple point: "Give Filipinos a proper home and they will cease to be perennial victims."

Reming unleashed mudslides, buried entire villages, and permanently scarred the map of Bicol. It left 709 people dead, 2,190

BICOL GK HOMES/ A4

CHACHA
GLORIA



2006

By Monica Feria
Photo Editor: Boy Cabrido

IT WAS THE YEAR OF OUR GREAT DIVIDE OVER CHARter change and the military coup that never was, followed by the rounding up of the usual suspects. The predictable Left and Right standoff exploded into the mysterious, seemingly systematic killings of Leftist leaders and critical journalists.

And yet, we pulled together as one people at every disaster that struck the country one after the other. But the good times, few as they were, celebrated national unity as well as in Pacquiao's spectacular victories.

At yearend, the searing images of raging debates, discord and discontent gave way to an economic uptrend, sober reflection and high hopes for 2007. Only makes sense. Because we are down there.
There's no other way to go but up.

Continued pages A7 & A16.

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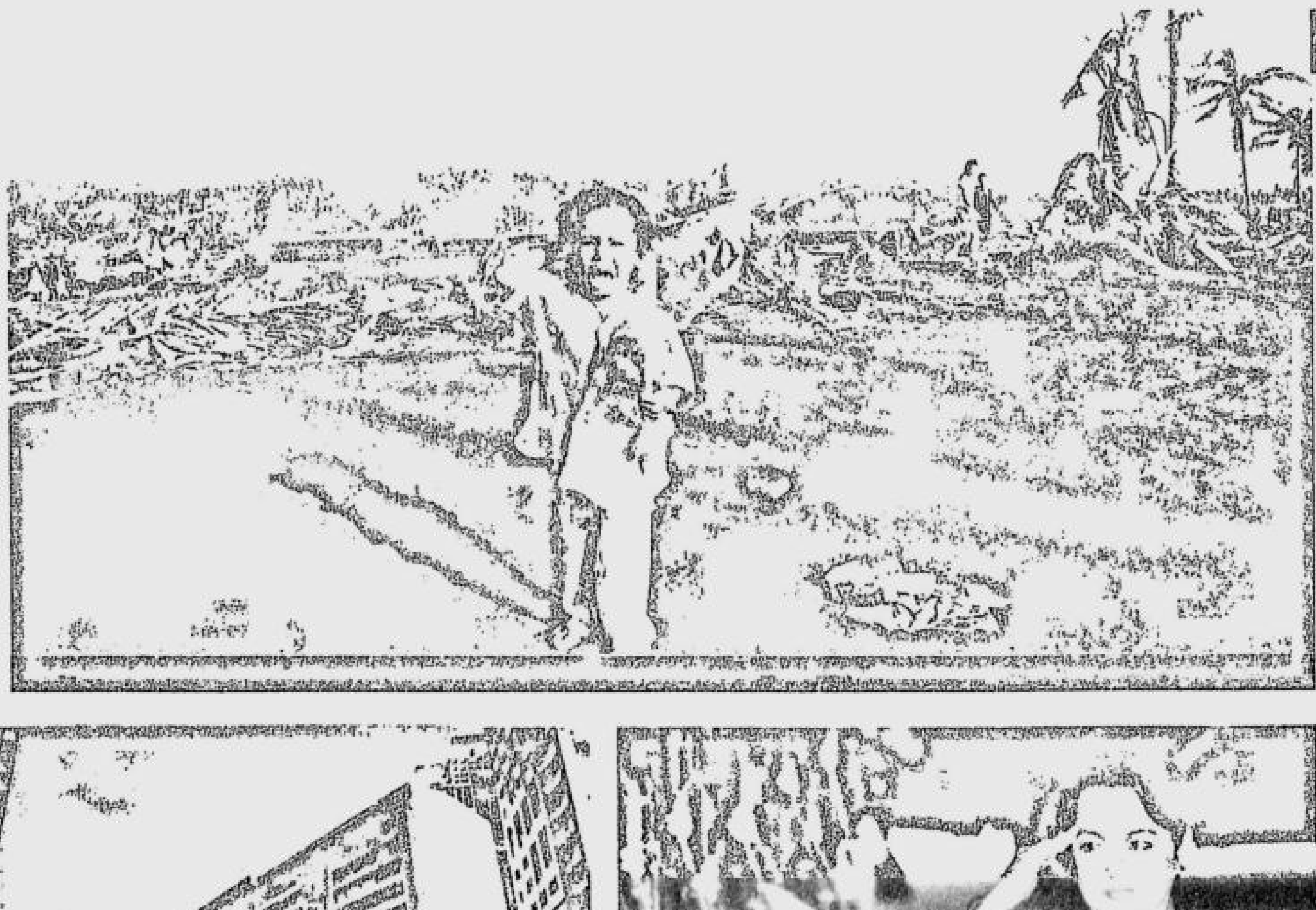

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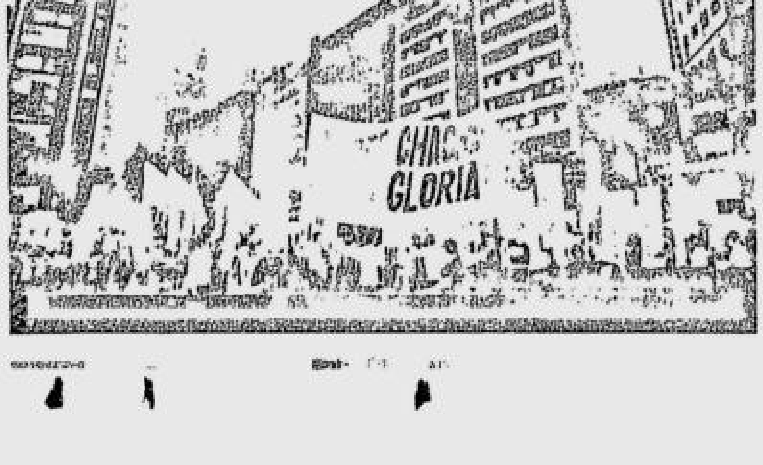
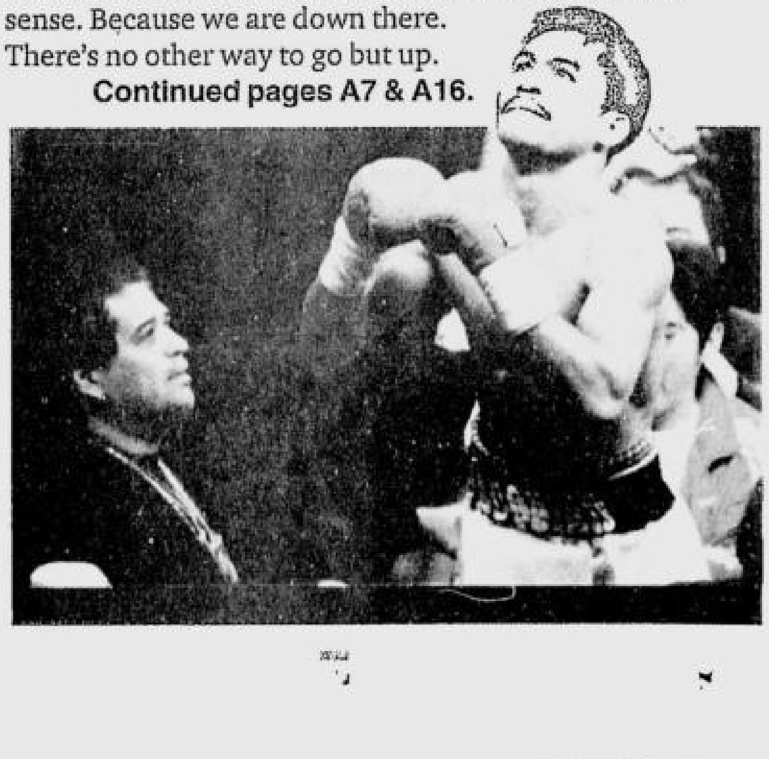




WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thundestorms becoming widespread rains over the eastern sections of Visayas and Mindanao which may trigger flashfloods and landslides. The rest of the country will be mostly cloudy with scattered rainshowers.

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/12/31/06 SOURCE PAGASA

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	**Roxas**	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	**Cebu**	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	**Tacloban**	Rains
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	**Gen. Santos**	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	**Zamboanga**	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	**Cagayan de Oro**	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	**Davao**	Cloudy with Rains

Customs chief wants judge fired

By Leila B. Salaverria

FOR BLOCKING THE TRANSFER OF A CUSTOMS official to a new office, an Olongapo City judge's own job may be on the line after the Bureau of Customs asked the Supreme Court to dismiss the judge from the service.

Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales has accused Olongapo Regional Trial Court Judge Ramon Caguioa of gross ignorance of the law, manifest partiality and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service in an administrative complaint filed before the Supreme Court, according to the BOC.

The complaint stemmed from Caguioa's issuance of a writ of preliminary injunction stopping Morales from implementing his own 2006 order reassigning Port of Subic district collector Andres Salvacion Jr. to the Port of Cagayan de Oro and replacing him with Marietta Zamoranos.

Morales said he had asked the Supreme Court to dismiss Caguioa from the service, which would result in his losing his retirement benefits and not allow his reemployment in the government.

According to Morales, Caguioa should not have entertained Salvacion's petition to stop the latter's transfer because this had become moot with Zamoranos' assumption of office.

Morales also said the issuance of the injunction was, in effect, a prejudgment of the case and a virtual acceptance of Salvacion's contention that his reassignment was improper.

He also said the parties involved had yet to present evidence to support their arguments.

Caguioa's complaint should have first been brought to the Civil Service Commission, which has exclusive jurisdiction over the transfer, reassignment and promotion of personnel, Morales said.

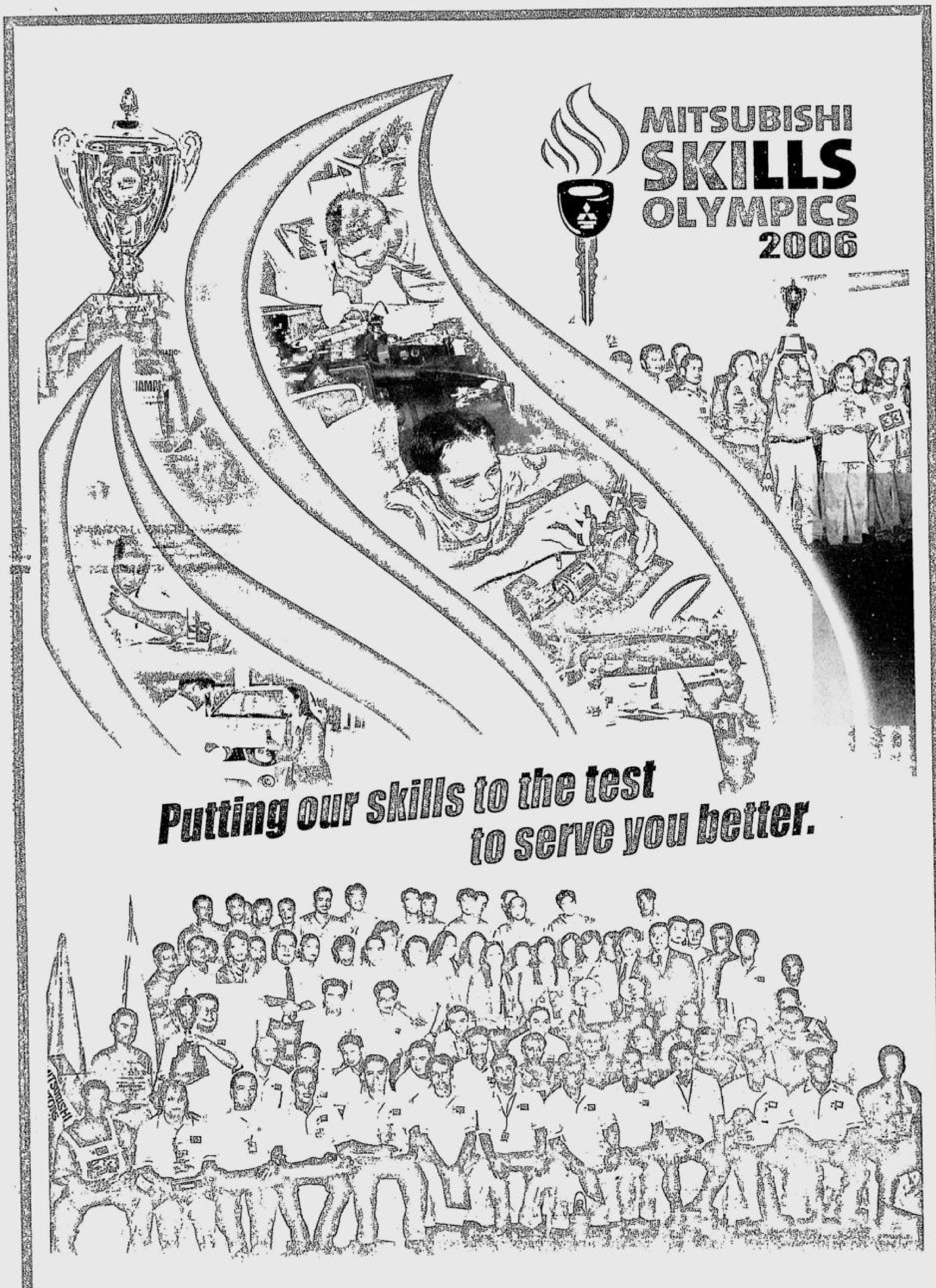
Morales also said Caguioa had no legal authority to interfere with the commissioner's prerogative under the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines to transfer or reassign customs personnel.

He said earlier Supreme Court rulings state that government employees whose appointments are not station-specific may be reassigned from one office to another within the same agency.

Customs personnel have been known to oppose their transfers in the past.

Some time ago, Port of Cebu collector Lourdes Mangaoang questioned her reassignment to the Port of Iloilo, saying it had not been approved by Finance Secretary Margarito Teves.

Carlos So, then district collector at the Manila International Container Port (MICP), did not immediately leave his post after being reassigned to the Office of the Commissioner—a move generally considered as being placed on floating status.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Service Advisor	Mr. Fernando Ramos	Carworld, Inc.
Service Technician	Mr. Nelson Bustillo	Diamond Motor Corp.
Service Team		Union Motor Corp.
Skills Olympics Overall Champion		Union Motor Corp.

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Noli off to US today for Ford funeral rites

By Cynthia D. Balana

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO will attend state funeral services for former United States President Gerald R. Ford in Washington, D.C. as the special representative of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

De Castro will leave for Washington today and is expected back in Manila by Friday.

The 38th president of the US, Ford died on Tuesday, Dec. 26, at the age of 93. He became president in August 1974 following the resignation of President Richard M. Nixon as a result of the Watergate scandal.

The rites in the US began with a prayer service and public viewing of Ford's body on Friday noon (Saturday in Manila) at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Palm Desert, California, near the home Ford retired to following his presidency and lived in for the last 30 years of his life.

De Castro said he was instructed to only attend the Mass and sign the guest book during the ceremony on Jan. 2 at the Washington National Cathedral where President George W. Bush is expected to speak. He said it was Malacañang that provided his itinerary.

Ford will be interred in a hillside site north of his presidential museum in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Jan. 4.

On Wednesday, President Arroyo sent a letter to Betty Ford, the president's widow, to convey the nation's condolences.

"The Filipino nation will always remember the late President not only as a true friend of the Philippines, but as a dedicated leader who led [his] country through a challenging period of transition for all Americans," Ms Arroyo wrote.

"It was through President Ford's quiet and dignified leadership that the United States once again gathered the vigor and determination to serve as an inspiration for all freedom-loving peoples of the world," she said.

The US Embassy in Manila, in a statement, said President Ford was a great man who devoted the best years of his life to serving his country. He was also a strong supporter of US-Philippine relations, it said, and served in the US Navy in support of the US landings at Leyte and Mindoro during World War II.

In December 1975, he returned to visit the Philippines, this time as President of the United States.

Abra gov mum on solon's slay

ABRA GOV. VICENTE VALERA HAS REFUSED to give a formal statement to police regarding allegations that he masterminded the killing of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin.

Director Jesus Versoza, director of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG), yesterday said investigators from CIDG and the Quezon City police went to see Valera at Camp Crame on Saturday.

Valera has been detained in the camp since early Saturday after he and his aides were arrested for traveling on a vehicle without license plates. Police also discovered seven guns in his van.

"Our investigators went to him and he acceded to be interviewed. But he refused to give any formal statement [on the Bersamin murder]," Versoza said.

But he said Valera promised to appear before Quezon City police chief Sr. Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula and give a statement on the murder of Bersamin, Valera's political rival, who was shot to death on the grounds of the Mt. Carmel Church in Quezon City on Dec. 16.

"Otherwise, there was nothing significant in the interview," said Versoza, who added that he expects Valera to deny any involvement in the killing from what he has said in previous interviews.

Valera and his aides were likely to spend New Year's Eve in detention as his lawyers were still trying to arrange bail for him yesterday.

The police's Traffic Management Group has filed charges of illegal possession of firearms, a bailable offense, against the governor and his companions.

Alcuin Papa

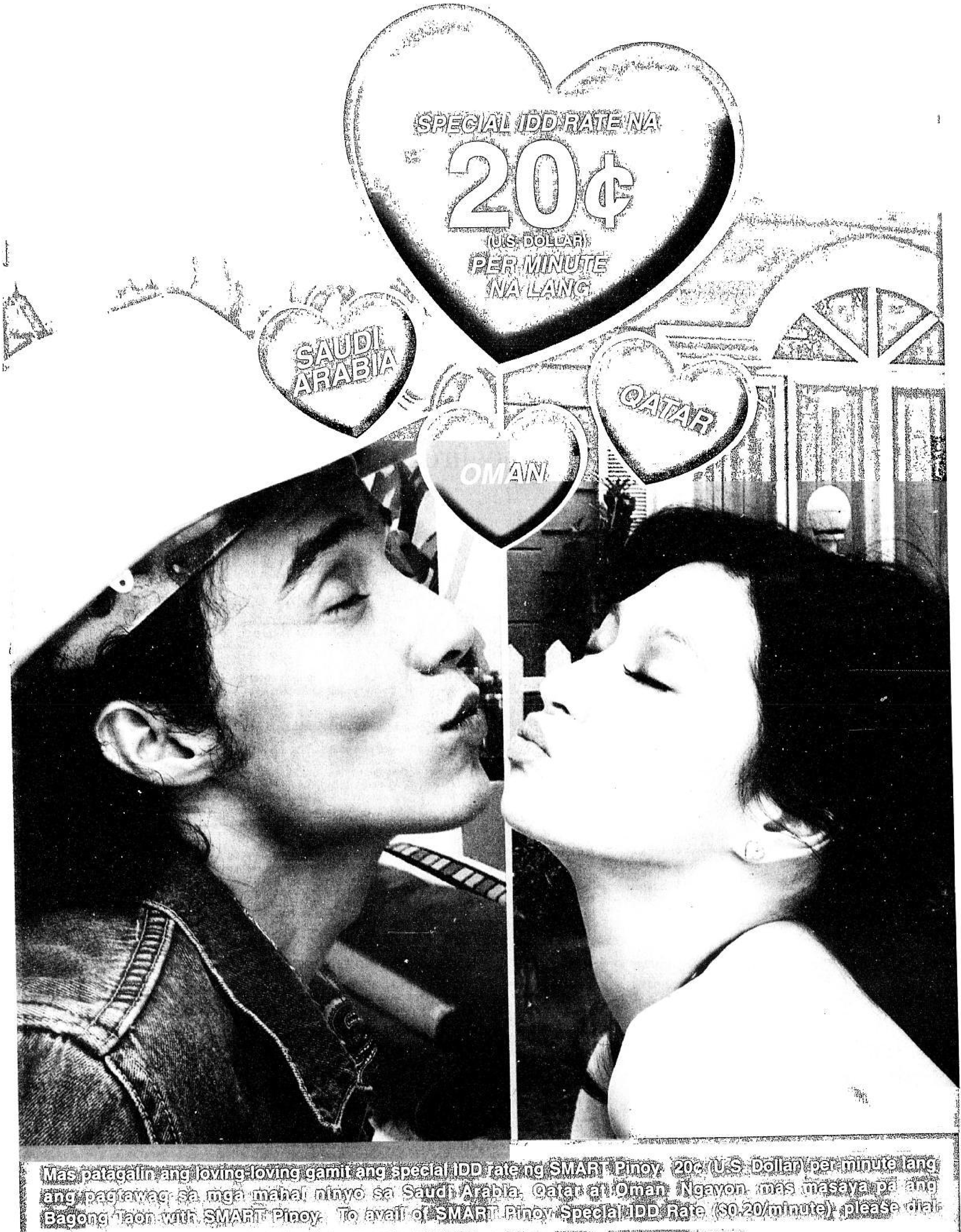
President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

Mula January 1 - 31, 2007 handog ng

SMART PINOY

ngayong Bagong Taon, sa pakikipagtulungan ng Pangulong Gloria Macapagal - Arroyo at sa simulain ni Senator Joker Arroyo at ng Senado, DOTC at NTC

Senator Joker Arroyo



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Saddam Hussein buried in hometown

From page A1

killed so many during a bloody quarter-century rule was truly dead.

Saddam was captured in an underground hideout near Ouja on Dec. 13, 2003, eight months after he fled Baghdad ahead of advancing American troops.

The former Iraqi leader's burial place is about 3 km from the graves of his sons Odai and Qusai in the main town cemetery. The sons and a grandson were killed in a gunbattle with the American forces in Mosul in July 2003.

Vengeance

Um Abdullah, a Sunni and teacher in Tikrit, said she would wear black to mourn the city's favorite son.

"Saddam will be a hero in our eyes," she said. "I have five kids and I will teach them to take revenge on Americans."

Police blocked the entrances to Tikrit and said nobody was allowed to leave or enter the city for four days. Despite the security precaution, gunmen took to the streets, carrying pictures of Saddam, shooting into the air and calling for vengeance.

Security forces also set up roadblocks at the entrance to another Sunni stronghold, Samarra, and a curfew was imposed after about 500 went into the streets to protest the execution.

Among minority Sunnis there was deep anger, born not only of Saddam's execution but of the loss of their decades-long political and economic dominance that began with Saddam's ouster in the US invasion nearly four years ago.

"The president, the leader, Saddam Hussein is a martyr and God will put him along with other martyrs," said Yahya al-Attawi, who led prayer at a towering Sunni mosque constructed by Saddam in Tikrit.

A day earlier, Iraqis awoke to television images of a noose being slipped over Saddam's neck and his white-shrouded body, the pre-dawn work of black-hooded hangmen. They went to bed as new video emerged showing Saddam exchanging taunts with onlookers before the gallows floor dropped away and the former dictator swung from the rope.

OWNER UNKNOWN: This photo obtained by The Associated Press from an Arab language website appears to show Saddam hanging from a noose. It appeared to have been taken by a camera phone. AP

In Baghdad's Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City on Saturday, victims of his three decades of autocratic rule took to the streets on Saturday to celebrate, dancing, beating drums and hanging Saddam in effigy. Celebratory gunfire erupted across other Shiite neighborhoods in Baghdad and other predominantly Shiite regions of the country.

Sunni stronghold

There was no sign of a feared Sunni uprising in retaliation for the execution, and the bloodshed from civil warfare was not far off the daily average—92 from bombings and death squads.

Outside the Sunni insurgent stronghold of Ramadi, west of the capital, loyalists marched with Saddam pictures and waved Iraqi flags.

Defying curfews, hundreds took to the streets vowing revenge in Samarra, north of Baghdad, and gunmen paraded and fired into the air in support of Saddam in Tikrit, his hometown.

Still, authorities imposed curfews sparingly in contrast to the several-day lockdown put in place after Saddam was sentenced to death on Nov. 5.

The responses within Iraq to Saddam's death echoed the larger reaction across the Middle East, with his enemies rejoicing and his defenders proclaiming him a martyr.

Problems remain

But some Iraqis—like 34-year-old Haider Hamed, a candy store owner in east Baghdad—wondered what would really change with the execution of Saddam.

"He's gone, but our problems continue," said the Shiite Muslim, whose uncle was killed in one of Saddam's many brutal purges. "We brought problems on ourselves after Saddam because we began fighting Shiite on Sunni and Sunni on Shiite."

There were cheers at the cafeteria of a US outpost in Baghdad as soldiers having breakfast learned Saddam had been hanged.

But members of the Army's 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery Regiment, on patrol in an overwhelmingly Shiite neighborhood in eastern Baghdad, said the execution wouldn't get them home any faster.

'Something big will happen'

"Nothing really changes," said Capt. Dave Eastburn, 30. "The militias run everything now, not Saddam."

Staff Sgt. David Earp, who also fought in 1991's Operation Desert Storm, said the execution worried him.

"In my opinion, something big is going to happen," said Earp, of Colorado. "There will be a response. Probably not today because they know we are looking for one, but soon."

Saddam appears calm in final moments

BAGHDAD, IRAQ—THE SCENE was at once macabre and riveting.

One of the most notorious dictators of the late 20th century, his hands bound behind him, was led up the stairs of the gallows by masked men in leather coats. A few seconds later, a trapdoor snapped open and—with a crash—the tyrant was dead.

Saddam may have been the first chief of state executed in the age of the Internet and the camera phone. Probably because of that, his death was graphically documented on video, and available worldwide, within hours.

This was not a Hollywood version of an execution: In a video aired on Iraqi TV and several web sites, the former strongman did not plead for his life, nor did he violently resist the executioners who slipped the rope around his neck. State television did not broadcast footage of the actual hanging.

But camera phone video, posted in full or in part on several Arabic language Web sites, picked up where the TV coverage left off. In it, Saddam was taunted in the final seconds leading up to his execution, and appeared to have smiled at his tormentors. While, the sentence was carried out, he calmly recited verses from the Koran in a clear voice.

Finally, Saddam's body can be seen swinging in the dim light—his neck apparently snapped.

One of the most striking things about the grisly videos, perhaps, was how calmly and cooperatively the tyrant faced death.

Saddam had reportedly asked that, as Iraq's commander in chief, he be sent before a firing squad. Instead, he was condemned to die on the gallows—as though he were a garden variety Iraqi thug or criminal.

When the time came, before dawn in Baghdad, Saddam did not wear his familiar military uniform with its jaunty beret but a black coat over a white shirt, black trousers and black shoes. His jet black hair was carefully combed, his salt-and-pepper beard neatly clipped.

The 69-year-old Saddam struggled briefly when US military guards handed him over to his Iraqi executioners, said Sami al-Askari, a political adviser to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. But it was apparently his last effort at physical resistance.

Saddam was taken to a former military intelligence headquarters in Baghdad's Shiite neighborhood of Kazimiyah, in northern Baghdad. During his regime, he had numerous dissidents executed in the facility.

Munir Haddad, an appeals court judge who witnessed the hanging, told the British Broadcasting Corp. that Saddam was not sedated.

"Not at all, Saddam was normal and in full control," Haddad said. "He was aware of his fate and he knew he was about to face death. He said 'This is my end, this is the end of my life, but I started my life as a fighter and as a political militant so death does not frighten me.'" AP

2007 Year of the Fire Boar: Clash of fire, water

From page A1

According to feng shui expert Marites Allen, the year of the fire boar will bring some interesting developments, both positive and negative.

As with any year, certain businesses will thrive in 2007, while some will not be so lucky.

Certain individuals will also be luckier than others, depending on what animal sign they were born in and even the time and date of their births.

Allen noted that the Year of the Fire Boar was characterized by clashing elements, fire and water, with water being an element innate to the boar.

This could mean conflict and even tragedies and illnesses, said Allen, president of the World of Feng Shui Inc.

She also noted that the Year of the Fire Boar did not contain spring, which the Chinese consider a lucky season as spring connotes new life or beginnings.

While the Year of the Fire Dog last year started on Jan. 29, the coming Year of the Fire Boar starts on Feb. 18, well after Feb. 3 to 5 which is the start of spring in the Chinese lunar calendar.

"Last year, we had a double spring—one at the start of the year and another one at the tail end of the year, this coming February," Allen explained.

"But the coming Year of the Fire Boar does not have spring at all," she said.

This does not bode well for the coming year, she said.

As if the absence of spring were not enough, Allen said the illness star dominates the Year of the Fire Boar.

"This means that there's a strong vulnerability to illnesses and diseases. There are strong indications that there may be outbreaks," she said in an interview.

Despite these indications, however, the spread of diseases, even fatal ones, can be prevented, she said.

People should take the precautions to avoid getting sick—get enough rest, stick to a healthy diet, and exercise regularly.

More tragedies

Aside from possible outbreaks of diseases, the Year of the Fire Boar, with its conflicting elements, could also bring tragedies, particularly air and sea disasters.

She said the clashing elements of water could mean aircraft or shipping-related accidents.

Allen said that last year, feng shui analysis indicated "land tragedies" at the start and end of the year.

"We had that landslide in Leyte near the start of the year. We also considered the stampede in Ultra as a land tragedy. Then at the end of the year, there was Mayon Volcano, plus the typhoons," she said.

Quarrelsome patriarchs

The Year of the Fire Boar may also see patriarchs being the less tolerant member of any relationship: the husband or wife, family members and even the leader of a country.

"The hostile number 3 may bring legal problems and plenty of misunderstandings. Husbands will be a lot less tolerant in 2007. There will be quarrels and aggravations with serious repercussions," Allen said.

Businesses to enter and to shun

She said businesses falling under the metal and earth industries have "great potential to harness the prosperity luck."

Lucky businesses include airlines, vehicle- and computer-related industries, mining and real estate, buildings and other infrastructure-related industries.

Businesses that would face challenges are those that use a lot of fire and electricity, including restaurants and the entertainment industry, she said.

Lucky, unlucky signs

People born under certain animal signs will fare better than others.

Those born in the years of the Horse, Sheep and Monkey will be in for a good 2007, said Allen.

The sheep will be "truly blessed with good fortune and luck," the monkey will have a "fruitful" year with numerous wealth-making opportunities and much luck in lotteries.

There will be plenty of opportunities and good luck for the horse and people born under this sign will be able to make their dreams come true in 2007.

The rabbit will continue to have an "energetic" year, with some risk of physical and emotional breakdown if not enough rest is taken.

The tiger, rooster and dragon will see their luck improve in 2007 compared with 2006.

The rat, ox, snake, dog and boar will not be as lucky in the Year of the Fire Boar. The rat will experience poor health and financial loss, while the dog will have a mediocre year, with many petty squabbles and other stressful situations.

The ox, being in the "afflicted" northeast sector in the year of the fire boar, will not have such a smooth year and should take care not to be swayed by anyone.

In conflict with the boar is the snake, which means the coming year of the fire boar will not be very good for people born under this sign. Those under the snake sign should be careful whom they trust and should always choose their words carefully.

The boar itself is not seen to be very lucky this year, due mainly to the conflicting elements of fire and water.

Conflicting beliefs

Allen is a practitioner not just of Chinese astrology but of feng shui, the whole Chinese belief system involving a mix of geographical, religious, philosophical, mathematical, aesthetic and astrological ideas. According to her, feng shui is "not superstition, not religion, not magic."

"We do a lot of research and our analysis is based on scientific calculations," she said.

But even some ethnic Chinese do not themselves believe in feng shui.

"For me, good feng shui is not about arranging beds and desks or having that yellow cat with a moving arm on the cash desk. It's about feeling good about the place. If you enter a building and it feels eerie, I wouldn't want to stay in that building for too long," said Robina Gokongwei-Pe, of the prominent Gokongwei business clan.

"And if you're referring to the wart-infested green frog biting a gold coin or the yellow cat with a moving arm that's trying to say, 'money come, money come,' no, we don't use that at home nor the office. Mainly because they don't match my furniture!" she added.

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   c. Costings
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Bicol GK homes withstood 'Reming'

From page A1

injured, and 23,000 families homeless in Bicol alone, according to the latest official count.

But in the 3,000 GK homes spread around Bicolandia, no resident was killed or hurt by Reming's onslaught in December and by the earlier "Milényo" in October, said Meloto.

Relief centers

In fact, some of the GK sites ended up serving as relief and evacuation centers post-Reming, Meloto said in an interview.

This was particularly true of the 20 GK sites in Camarines Sur and the five in Albay, two of the worst-hit provinces "where our beneficiaries became benefactors themselves," according to Meloto.

"Their neighboring barangays were all wiped out. But all they needed to do was repair their roofs because the lahar, the floods, did not reach them. They recovered fast enough to assist in the relief work," he said.

The well-planned villages were spared from the mudflow as they were situated in areas that had been given a safety "clearance" by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, a key prerequisite of a GK community blueprint, he said.

It's true that around 700 GK homes in the region had their roofs damaged by Reming, but Meloto said there was a scientific explanation for this.

"Our roofs were designed for [wind speeds of up to] 200 kph. They withstood Milenyo's 190 kph, but Reming's was up to 260 kph," he noted.

Established in 1995, Gawad Kalinga has been forging partnerships between government, business and civic sectors in providing decent shelter for former slum dwellers.

Sweat equity

It is a mammoth task in a country were 70 percent of the population is considered landless, many of whom end up squatting in highly vulnerable areas like coastlines, riverbanks and hillsides.

GK basically operates by pooling the resources of various sectors. Government provides the land, the initial funding and infrastructure. The private sector comes up with counterpart funds or building materials, while the beneficiaries supply "sweat equity" by taking part in the actual construction.

There are now more than 1,000 GK communities nationwide, found in 64 of the country's 80 provinces, housing half a million residents, said Meloto whose work earned him the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership last year.

But while citing GK's triumph over disasters, Meloto warned against the long-term effects of the devastation from the successive typhoons.

MELOTO to honor volunteers

Exodus to Metro Manila

"We see an exodus of more squatters to Metro Manila and other cities from the provinces where there have been massive evacuation because of the typhoons," he said.

This phenomenon was hardly new but a long-observed trend in urban migration, he said.

To help mitigate this, he said GK would be focusing its efforts in 2007 on Bicol, as well as Samar, Leyte, Mindoro, areas that have seen severe displacements.

The target is to finish at least 5,000 housing units in Albay alone before the onset of the rainy season, he said.

Before doing that, however, GK will pause to give recognition to its growing army of volunteers.

Heroes Summit

Meloto announced that for its annual "Bayani Summit" (Heroes' Summit) on Jan. 12, Gawad Kalinga is honoring individuals, corporations, schools and other organizations which have helped in GK's regular projects and disaster-relief activities in 2006.

Among the honorees are the high school students of the Saint Pedro Poveda College, who decided to forego their annual prom in October, donating their budget for the party to GK.

Some 1,000 Filipino-Americans also held fund-raising marathons in 11 cities in the United States from October to December last year, raising enough funds to build around 600 GK houses, said Meloto.

The summit will also highlight the contributions of the Philippine Military Academy cadets and the Ateneo de Manila community, among others.

"We will honor them and show that ours can be a country of heroes, of people who have not stopped hoping and dreaming of a slum-free society," Meloto said.

RP cinema marks 110th year today

By Nick Deocampo
Contributor

CARMEN ROSALES
ROGELIO DE LA ROSA
Maalaala Mo Kaya?
PATRIA PLATA
Direction MAR S TORRES
CENTER THEATRE JAN 28 31

OLD MOVIE poster of "Maalaala Mo Kaya?" starring Rogelio de la Rosa and Carmen Rosales: 110 years of Philippine cinema

CINEMA IN THE PHILIPPINES celebrates its 110th year today. If an account in the Spanish-language newspaper, "El Comercio," is to be believed, it was on Jan. 1, 1897 when the first film exhibition was held at No. 12, Interior in Escolta, Manila.

The film show was called "Espectaculo Cientifico de Pertierra," (Pertierra's Scientific Spectacle), named after the Spaniard who brought the first film equipment to the Philippines, Señor Francisco Pertierra.

It was not an auspicious start for the motion picture. Only two days earlier, Jose Rizal was executed at Bagumbayan. One year after, Filipinos declared their independence from Spain after months of bloody fighting, only to be plunged deeper into political chaos when the United States snatched the fledgling republic.

The turn-of-the-century also meant a struggle for recognition for cinema in an age when the Spanish zarzuela dominated the entertainment scene. Despite its difficult birth, it is remarkable to find in the century that followed cinema becoming the defining culture that helped shape the contemporary Filipino.

Hispanic beginnings

The date of its birth reveals much about the identity of Filipino cinema. While much has been made of local film being an imitation of Hollywood movies or as embodying the national identity, it should not come as a surprise to know that Filipino cinema owes much to its Hispanic beginnings. Let us start with the words we use to talk about film. Ever wondered where words like *pelikula, sine, artista, takilya, telon*, and even the one which we use for the hated *kontrabida* come from? They were obviously derived from the Spanish *pelicula, cine, artista, taquilla, telon* and *contravida*.

And what about Catholic religious imagery dominating the visual design of many Filipino films? Notice how it is always in front of an altar that a secret confession is made to resolve all conflicts at the end of many Filipino movies. Even in the films that challenge the Church—from Ishmael Bernal's "Himala" to Lino Brocka's "Orapronobis"—our film artists cannot cast out their deep-seated Catholic visual culture. More important than these external symbols, however, is the Catholic ideology embedded in them that once became the basis for our calling ourselves "Filipino." At one time in our history, to be "Filipino" meant to be Hispanic—and Catholic.

More telling of our films' Hispanic flavor are the screen names that movie stars use to make themselves more attractive to the public. American *mestiza* stars like Rose Stagner became Rosa del Rosario and Anita Lake assumed the monicker, Anita Linda. Dorothy Jones became our favorite *galawgaw* star, Nida Blanca. American mestizo Marvin Gardner became Eduardo de Castro who not only acted but directed films like the famous "Zamboanga."

What social values went with the naming of our movie stars? Were not these actors with Spanish-derived names the screen luminaries adulated by mainstream society? And what fate awaited those who assumed native names like Pugo, Dely Atay-atayan or Matutina? Were these not the funny characters who got clobbered and ridiculed in their scenes?

Alien form

Knowing how our cinema started makes us reflect on the values we attach to a form that has dominated our cultural development. It makes us wonder how an alien form like film which is not indigenous but an imported technology came to be the locus of our national culture and identity.

Take for example the way musicals came to be the dominant genre in the emerging Filipino cinema. This was because of early film's close affinity to the Spanish *zarzuela*, a form of musical theater that was the dominant theater form at the time of film's arrival in the country.

The pioneering film of the Spanish-speaking movie director Don Jose Nepomuceno, "Dalagang Bukid," was based on a nativized *zarzuela* (*sarswela*) of the same title. Dalagang Bukid was followed by an excess of hybrid musical sarswelas while no films were ever made of indigenous tales like the Hinilawod of central Panay island or the Lam-ang epic of Ilocos.

The Spanish roots of Philippine cinema tell us of a past that we present-day Filipinos have learned to obscure in our collective memory. The cultural erasure came in several stages. Two of the more pronounced causes came with the influence of Anglo-Saxon culture when the Americans became our colonial masters who then forcefully substituted English for the Spanish language. The other came with the nationalist desire to supplant everything foreign with what was deemed native.

No marker

The early period of cinema in the Philippines has been so forgotten that we have even failed to recognize the very street where the first film exhibition was made. Is it too late to find No. 12 Escolta and perhaps place a historical marker on it in order to designate its importance to Filipino culture? If we cannot find it, surely one can still locate the intersection between Escolta and a street now called Tomas Pinpin where in 1897 the second film screening in the country was held inside a jewelry shop at No. 18 owned by French importers, the Levy brothers. On the second floor of this corner edifice, two Swiss businessmen, Leibman and Peritz, showed films using the Lumiere *cinematographe* imported by another Spaniard, Antonio Ramos.

Paradoxically, the roots of our national cinema may be found in its international origins. Cinema in the Philippines was international from birth. It was Spaniards who brought in the first equipment. French films were the first to be shown in makeshift venues owned by French jewelers and capitalized by Swiss financiers. The first real movie house was set up by a British named Walgrah. German, Danish, Italian and even Mexican films were shown. Manila was truly a cosmopolitan city when film arrived here.

While the Philippines may rank third after India and China in showing the first films in Asia (Japan and Siam came only a few months later), the moving picture device rapidly spread to other islands within the year of its arrival, 1897. Accounts of film screenings were reported in Iloilo, a bustling port city next only in progress to Manila, and in the island of Cebu. In Cebu, the street where the first film show was held is even known—Calle Colon, the oldest street in the Philippines. Again, not a sign exists there to bear witness to film's initial foray into the archipelago.

Cinema and nationhood

Recalling cinema's origin gives us an occasion to remember the country's historical past and raise questions about its evolving identity. Film history may even make us take notice of the fact that film is much older than the Philippines as a formal nation-state. With film's birth date in 1897 and our formal declaration as an independent nation coming only in 1946, it gives us much pause to think about the role cinema played in preparing and shaping us Filipinos into becoming the nation that we are today.

With the journey it took to assume an identity— from Hispanic to Hollywood, from a forced "nationalist" identity during the Japanese occupation to the romanticized "Filipino" in the classic '50s, all the way to the "bakya" movies of the '60s and into the shift to digital technology at the turn of a new century—film has many lessons to teach us in terms of knowing who we are as a people.

During 110 years of the cinema's growth, we Filipinos have seen wars and revolutions, seen ourselves transform from colony into nation. And even if we are now free, we have also seen the rise and fall of regimes under our own rulers. Through all these experiences, film has been with us in our journey reflecting much of who we are as a people even if viewed only through a glass, darkly.

(*The writer is a filmmaker and author of "Cine: Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines" and "Origins of Cinema in Asia."*)

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Happy New Year to all.

HONDA

4 reasons why Smith should be in RP custody

COMMENTARY

By Sen. Leticia R. Shahani, Ateneo Human Rights Center, Women and Gender Institute, Cedaw Watch
Contributors

THE UNDERSIGNED GROUPS express their outrage over how the Department of Justice and the Department of Foreign Affairs have taken the cudgels for Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith who, we have learned, has been released to the custody of the US Embassy upon orders of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

These officials have forgotten that they represent the Filipino people and not an American serviceman.

Instead of deferring to the judiciary's interpretation of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), they have thwarted the legal import of the original provisions of the VFA and substituted their own meaning to justify the transfer of Smith's custody to the United States.

This case is not only an issue of custody.

How the government conducts itself before a supposed co-equal sovereign will ultimately impact on the exercise of our sovereignty and will show how far the government is willing to abide by the provisions of the Constitution in upholding the dignity of the Filipino people, in respecting our human rights, and in protecting the rights of women against violence.

When the Philippines ratified the VFA, many nationalists feared the return of military abuses. Women's groups were apprehensive since any heavily militarized area is a breeding ground for prostitution and acts of violence against women.

One critical aspect of the VFA is in the area of criminal jurisdiction. In construing these provisions, there should be no attempt at departing from their true import to unduly favor the United States.

4 reasons

Custody of Smith belongs to the Philippines for the following reasons:

1. It is very clear from Article V, Paragraph 6 of the VFA that the US obligation to make Smith available to Philippine authorities for any investigation or judicial proceedings ceases "(i)n the event Philippine judicial proceedings are not completed within one year." Accordingly, "the one-year period will not include the time necessary to appeal."

Logic and common sense dictate that the judicial proceedings contemplated in that paragraph refer only to the proceedings during the trial state.

A contrary interpretation would mean that the Philippines will lose the right to demand from the US the production of Smith once the judicial proceedings, which include the period to appeal, are not completed within one year.

Absurd situation

This would result in the absurd situation where Smith's custody resides with the US, but without the corresponding obligation on their part to make him available to Philippine authorities because judicial proceedings were not completed within one year.

The VFA cannot be interpreted in a way that would leave the People of the Philippines without recourse or remedy against a US personnel charged with an offense.

2. The same paragraph clearly distinguishes between the period of conduct of judicial proceedings, when the US has exercised custody over Smith, and the period of appeal, during which he shall be detained in "facilities agreed on by appropriate Philippine and United States authorities."

Clear distinction

Philippine law clearly distinguishes between the status of the liberty of an accused during the conduct of the judicial proceedings in the trial court and on appeal.

Pursuant to a Supreme Circular 4-92-A, judges are required to immediately issue orders of commitment after the conviction of national prisoners (those sentenced to three years and one day and above). This should be done once an appeal is filed.

However, in recognition of the VFA, Judge Benjamin Pozon ordered the commitment of Smith to the Makati City Jail pending the agreement on the appropriate facility for the latter between the Philippines and the US.

Article V, Sec. 10 speaks of "confinement or detention" in facilities agreed on by the two parties. The judge, however, correctly pointed out that the "facilities" under this paragraph should be those run by the Philippine authorities and not by the Americans, as the Philippines could not possibly exercise jurisdiction over such place.

Constitution is supreme

The judge correctly applied the appropriate provision considering that Smith has already been convicted.

The exercise of criminal jurisdiction should be construed strictly in favor of the Philippine government because of the nature of the VFA.

Allowing Smith to remain in US custody would constitute a violation of the principles of the Constitution insofar as there is an abdication of the right of the State to exercise sovereign power over Smith.

3. We should not forget that our Constitution is supreme law and not even treaty provisions can subvert its guarantees.

Smith is 'national prisoner'

Unless Smith merits differential treatment, he must be treated in the same way as other "national prisoners" and be committed in a Philippine facility ... where Philippine jurisdiction can be exercised at all times.

4. We should be equally mindful of our country's other treaty obligations.

Leftist solons seek GMA impeachment

By Michael Lim Ubac and TJ Burgonio

CALLING PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo a "national traitor," the militant bloc in the House of Representatives vowed yesterday to press new impeachment charges against her for handing Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith to US control before the courts could rule on the custody issue.

"It's treachery against the Charter," declared Rep. Satur Ocampo of Bayan Muna, pointing out that "her attempt to curry US favor will cement her reputation as a rabid US puppet."

Ocampo predicted the handover of Smith would "provide the impetus for protests come the people power season," a reference to the anniversaries this month and in February of the popular revolts that toppled Ferdinand Marcos and Joseph Estrada from office.

Rep. Etta Rosales of Akbayan also said Ms Arroyo would pay for "smuggling" Smith out of the Makati jail under the cover of darkness.

"It's contempt under the rules of court, in total disrespect of the Constitution and judicial processes," Rosales said in a text message.

Rosales said the surrender of Smith to US custody was a constitutional ground for impeachment.

"They have no dignity because they have no spine to hold them up. Like shit they stink and must be flushed down—the entire cabal that usurps the throne today," she fumed.

Rep. Liza Maza of Gabriela saw a "US-Arroyo conspiracy," saying Smith's transfer "can only be possible with the consent of GMA.

Rep. Teddy Casiño of Bayan Muna said the handover was "an act of treason," adding that the "Arroyo regime is a disgrace to every self-respecting sovereign nation."

House Deputy Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano said in a phone interview that it was premature to launch an impeachment case out of the Smith case due to the one-year ban—which expires in July—on a new impeachment complaint against a sitting President.

He also doubted whether there was enough ground to impeach Ms Arroyo over the issue, which is still pending before the Court of Appeals.

"It's purely a legal issue. The court can still decide the other way, so by itself it can't be a solid ground. Usually we want grounds that can morally and legally stand any court scrutiny."

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. pressed for a public explanation from Ms Arroyo on the Smith transfer.

"Ultimately, Gloria should have the courage to tell the people that these things were done upon her direction," Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said.

Pimentel said that while Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno had admitted issuing the transfer order, it was clear that "Gloria's ghost was manipulating all these moves of Puno."

Sen. Richard Gordon said that since Smith's rape victim "Nicole" was expected to question the transfer before the Supreme Court, the President and her Cabinet would have to explain their actions before the high tribunal.

"They have to answer the issue of whether they're justified in fulfilling treaty obligations in accordance with their interpretation of the treaty," he said.

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said Puno's order without court authorization was "overreaching." But Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile believed the government action was justified.

Santiago said that while the condition for Smith's transfer had been complied with following an agreement between Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney, the executive branch could not carry out the transfer without court's authorization.

"The executive branch can't act unilaterally," she said.

GMA supports Smith's transfer

From page A1

because of pressure from the United States, and said Ms Arroyo had the power to interpret and carry out Philippine treaty obligations with the United States.

He dismissed an opposition threat to file a new impeachment case against Ms Arroyo over the issue. *(See story on this page.)*

Smith's transfer from the Makati City Jail, where he had been held for 25 days, to the embassy compound was carried out at past 11 p.m. on Friday. The Interior department claimed the unannounced turnover was carried out at that late hour to avoid traffic.

Checks by the INQUIRER with the Makati police and with the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority showed there was no report of any traffic jam in Makati at that hour.

Gonzalez, whose opinion on the issue of custody as spelled out under the Visiting Forces Agreement paved the way for Smith's transfer, said that "the President really wanted the VFA to be implemented because that's in the law and we are bound by it."

Gonzalez defended the transfer move, saying it was "normal" for the executive to carry this out.

"When you have a treaty, that is being implemented by the Executive," he said in a phone interview.

"The court interprets the law but the President also interprets, implements and executes the law," Gonzalez said.

No Palace dictation

Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno has said it was his office which authorized the transfer.

Ermita said the Palace had left it to the departments of interior, justice and foreign affairs to implement the VFA on the matter of Smith's custody.

"We are just awaiting the report of Secretary Puno on the details of the transfer," Ermita said in a phone interview.

He stressed that what the departments did was in line with their duties.

"We don't have to dictate to them," Ermita added.

Palace interpretation

Asked to comment on the opposition the transfer had engendered, Ermita said: "Let's just wait for developments ... I'm sure the departments know how to address it."

Gonzalez said that in the legal opinion sought by the DILG, he reiterated the treaty obligations of Manila and Washington and that "the VFA should take effect."

He also said that while the Court of Appeals had not resolved the custody issue, it had stamped the word "noted" on the government petition and on an agreement signed by Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney for Smith to be transferred to US custody.

"We understood it to mean we can already interpret it however we can," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez brushed aside opposition claims that the United States pressured the Philippines to effect Smith's transfer.

No pressure

"There was no pressure on (me). I don't even talk to the Americans," he said.

He also said the executive branch did not interfere in judicial matters or undercut the authority of the Court of Appeals.

"We are not intervening in judicial matters. That's why all these processes were filed with the CA," he said.

He said he considered the issue closed and did not expect the Court of Appeals to issue another resolution on the matter.

Gonzalez also said the issue could not be used as a basis for impeaching the President.

"It's not an impeachable offense, but if you think it's an impeachable offense, then you file an impeachment case," he said.

With a report from Tarra V. Quismundo

Politics clouds RP economic prospects

ANALYSIS

By Amando Doronila

THE PHILIPPINE PESO AND stock market ended the year on a high note, with the currency closing at 49.03 to the US dollar on Friday, its strongest rally in nearly six years.

Share prices closed on the last trading day of the year with the main index surging to 2,982.54, its best finish since April 7,1997 (at 2,990.6)

The surge prompted share dealers to claim it reflected investors' bullish outlook for the economy in 2007. "We ended the year with a bang as the fundamentals are looking up" for an economy on the mend, says First Grade Holdings Inc.

A rally extending up to the first quarter of 2007 is uncertain.

Bankers' warning

There are warnings from local bankers that the peso would come under pressure in the new year and could be traded at a high of 48 and a low of 52 against the dollar, "given the political uncertainties arising from the May elections."

Examining the economic outlook for 2007 from the perspective of growth rather than the more volatile movements of the share market and the peso-dollar rate, Dr. Bernardo Villegas, president of the University of Asia and the Pacific, paints a more pessimistic economic scenario.

In a paper titled, "Is the Philippine economy ready for take-off?" Villegas calls attention to the political uncertainties that make fund managers nervous.

Expected turbulence

"There will be expected turbulence ... in the months leading to the May 2007 elections," he says.

"Increased confrontation between the President and her political opponents and more aggressive moves to amend the Constitution will surely send confused signals to potential investors," says Villegas.

The paper asks whether the economy would break out from merely "muddling through."

The paper says strong exports, hefty increases in remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and a favorable environment for agriculture have made a growth rate of at least 5.5 percent achievable in 2006. This, however, lags behind the 7 to 10 percent GDP growth of Vietnam, India and China.

The paper recognizes that fund managers are driving the Philippine stock market to a record high. In mid-October, the Philippine index breached the 2,600 mark for the first time in seven years, growing 23.9 percent year-to-date. It was surpassed only by India and Indonesia.

Optimism

Much of the optimism about the Philippine economy can be attributed to a perception that significant fiscal reforms have reduced the government deficit, thanks to improved tax revenue generation and restraint in government spending.

Success in increasing tax revenues helped to pare down the budget deficit to only 2.1 percent of GDP, says Villegas. "A balanced budget by 2008 is deemed attainable."

At last year's Philippine Business Conference, the World Bank representative in the Philippines, Joachim von Armsberg, opined that the country could join its Asian neighbors in growing at 7 to 10 percent annually if it sent "strong policy signals" committed to attaining macroeconomic and fiscal stability while improving governance.

Improve business climate

Much more has to be done to improve the business climate, as can be inferred from the relatively poor performance of the Philippines in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI).

The Philippines received only $1.13 billion in FDI in 2005, Vietnam, $2 billion, and Thailand and Malaysia about $4 billion each.

"Foreign investors are still being turned off by corruption, high energy costs, high tax rates, uncertain regulatory policies, crime, and stringent labor laws," says the Villegas paper.

"If these obstacles are not addressed in the next four years, the Philippines will just muddle through instead of taking off at growth rates of 7 to 10 percent," it adds.

Infrastructure backlog

The paper notes that the single most important factor in accelerating beyond "muddling through" is breaking the infrastructure backlog.

The paper points out that the single most important factor for the resilience of the Philippine economy is the bumper foreign exchange remittances from OFWs that in 2005 amounted to more than $12 billion.

The report also says that one of the possible explanations for the disappointing results in most of the consumer-oriented businesses over the past 12 months is the significant slowdown of agriculture production in 2005. Agriculture grew at less than 3 percent compared with more than 6 percent in 2004.

Growth engines

The growth engines in the medium term are infrastructure spending, tourism, business outsourcing and manpower exports. Other possible high-growth sectors are logistics, high-value garments, agribusiness and furniture exports.

The biggest obstacle to attaining growth rates of 7 to 9 percent and to making a dent on the serious poverty situation, says the report, "is the uncertainty generated by the noisy squabbling of the nation's politicians."

The peso is expected to average 51.80 to the US dollar in 2007. Short-term interest rates will average 5.3 percent, the lowest since 2002. GDP is expected to grow 5.5 percent, behind the performance of its more dynamic neighbors.

For the medium term (2008-2010), GDP can grow at 6 percent. The peso will deteriorate to the level of 53.10 to the dollar as export revenues cannot keep pace with the burgeoning imports of capital goods needed by massive infrastructure projects planned for the next three to four years.

Restrictions on foreign equity

"If the political stalemate between the government and the opposition is resolved peacefully, the country is poised to receive higher levels of FDIs. Especially crucial for a higher level of FDIs is the removal from the Constitution of restrictions on foreign equity investments in mining, utilities, education and media.

"Under the pessimistic scenario, in which the status quo is assumed, the economy would attract only $1.5 billion in annual average FDIs in the next four years," says the paper.

"It is clear, therefore, that only if the assumptions under the optimistic scenario are realized could the Philippine economy take off into self-sustaining high growth."

Economic gains branded as an illusion

From page A1

the Philippines, told Agence France Presse.

"It's easy to pay down debt when you are not spending anything and you have record remittances being paid by Filipino overseas workers."

On the surface, the economic numbers for 2006 look impressive, especially so in a country that has fallen behind most of its regional neighbors over the years due to its vibrant but corrupt and often violent political culture.

Growth for 2006 is expected at 5.5-6.1 percent, a respectable performance if someway behind the likes of China and India, and short too of fast growing Vietnam.

OFW's remittances

Remittances from the eight million-plus overseas Filipino workers for the year are expected to top $10 billion, giving a strong boost to domestic liquidity and a key factor in keeping the economy afloat.

Additionally, increased revenues has helped reduce the budget deficit to around P90 billion, well below the target ceiling of P125 billion for this year.

With a current account surplus of $929 million in the third quarter of 2006, almost three times that of a year earlier, the government has been able to pay down debt, much to the delight of foreign investors who have helped pushed the stock market to levels not seen for nearly 10 years.

For Diokno, however, this is all being achieved at a cost.

"Spending on public infrastructure has dropped from 1.8 percent of gross domestic product in 2001 to 0.73 percent in 2006. Spending on education has dropped from 3.0 percent to 2.4 percent and health from 0.4 percent to 0.19 percent," he said.

"This type of spending pattern is short-sighted, insensitive and unsustainable."

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves conceded recently the government would need to spend at least 5 percent of GDP on infrastructure just for the country to keep up with its regional competitors.

Much of the decline in the deficit in 2006 was due to reduced government spending, he noted.

"This is not the ideal way to balance your budget," Teves said. "What you want is a combination of fiscal discipline, higher growth and the ability to translate these macroeconomic improvements into a meaningful experience that can be felt by the general population."

Ben Lim of the Center for People Empowerment and Governance said recently that over 10 million Filipinos go hungry every year and more than 35 million are living below the poverty line.

Employment data for October, the latest available, showed 33.2 million people were employed for the month, a slight improvement on the 32.9 million for October 2005.

Of that number, however, only one in two was in a regular salaried position while full-time employment was declining as employers sought out cheaper part-time labor.

'Walking on Knife Edge'

In a report called "Walking on a Knife Edge," economists Maitet Diokno-Pascual and Clarence Pascual noted that regular salaried workers are the primary source of personal income tax revenues but their numbers are falling.

"This is what we have got—a government relying on a stagnant salaried workforce and on a largely unemployed and income-challenged consumer base for the bulk of its taxes," they said. *AFP*

2006 Politics divides the nation

From page A1

'NO' TO CHARTER CHANGE

Multisectoral groups from both the Right and the Left marched nationwide to protest the Arroyo administration's move to force a shift to a parliamentary system thru a Constituent Assembly—even after the Supreme Court junked a pro-Cha-cha signature campaign as a "grand deception." For the first time all religious groups united against the move. Toward the yearend, the President called for a stop to the offensive—at least temporarily.

NEVER AGAIN
To Fascist Dictatorship

RAFFY LERMA

THEN AND NOW: Demonstrators marking the Sept. 21 anniversary of martial law say "never again" to government curtailment of civil liberties.

ERIK ARAZAS

ARCHBISHOP GAUDENCIO ROSALES TO GMA: "Character change, not Charter change... We're watching you!"

JOAN BONDOC

BRIG. GEN. DANILO LIM, Scout Ranger commander, reportedly called for a "withdrawal of support" for Arroyo in February.

HEADQUARTERS
PHILIPPINE MARINE CORPS

RYAN LIM

MARINE soldiers led by Col. Ariel Querubin protested the relief of erstwhile commanant Maj. Gen. Renato Miranda.

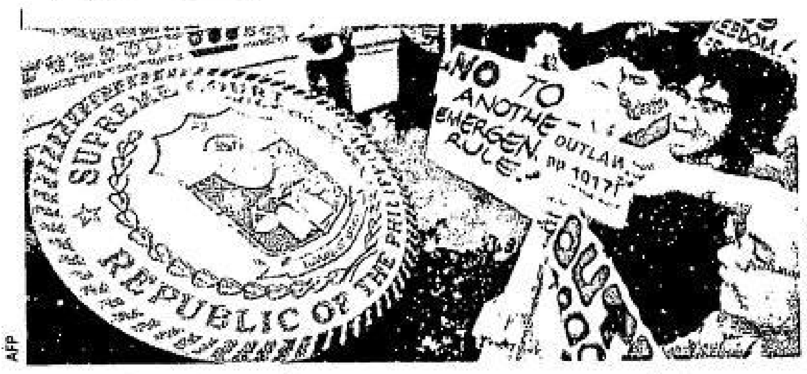
EMBATTLED PRESIDENCY

President Arroyo battled the most serious coup attempt against her administration, survived a second impeachment bid and continued to sidestep investigations into allegations of poll cheating. Her survival entailed the declaration of a state of emergency, court martial of bemedaled officers and arrest of militant members of the House of Representatives. "I have beaten the opposition at every turn," she told Bloomberg TV in August. But The Economist at yearend said her authority remained fragile and was increasingly dependent on the support of the military.

GREGORIO "GRINGO" HONASAN

GREGORIO HONASAN, suspected leader in the Feb. 25 coup plot, was captured Nov. 15 in a metro condominium.

2006 Judiciary asserts independence

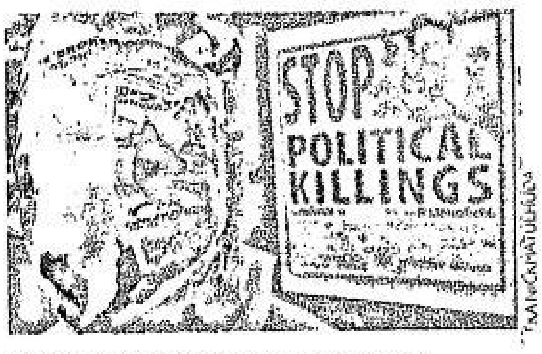


AFP

EDWIN BACASMAS

A SHINING YEAR FOR THE COURTS

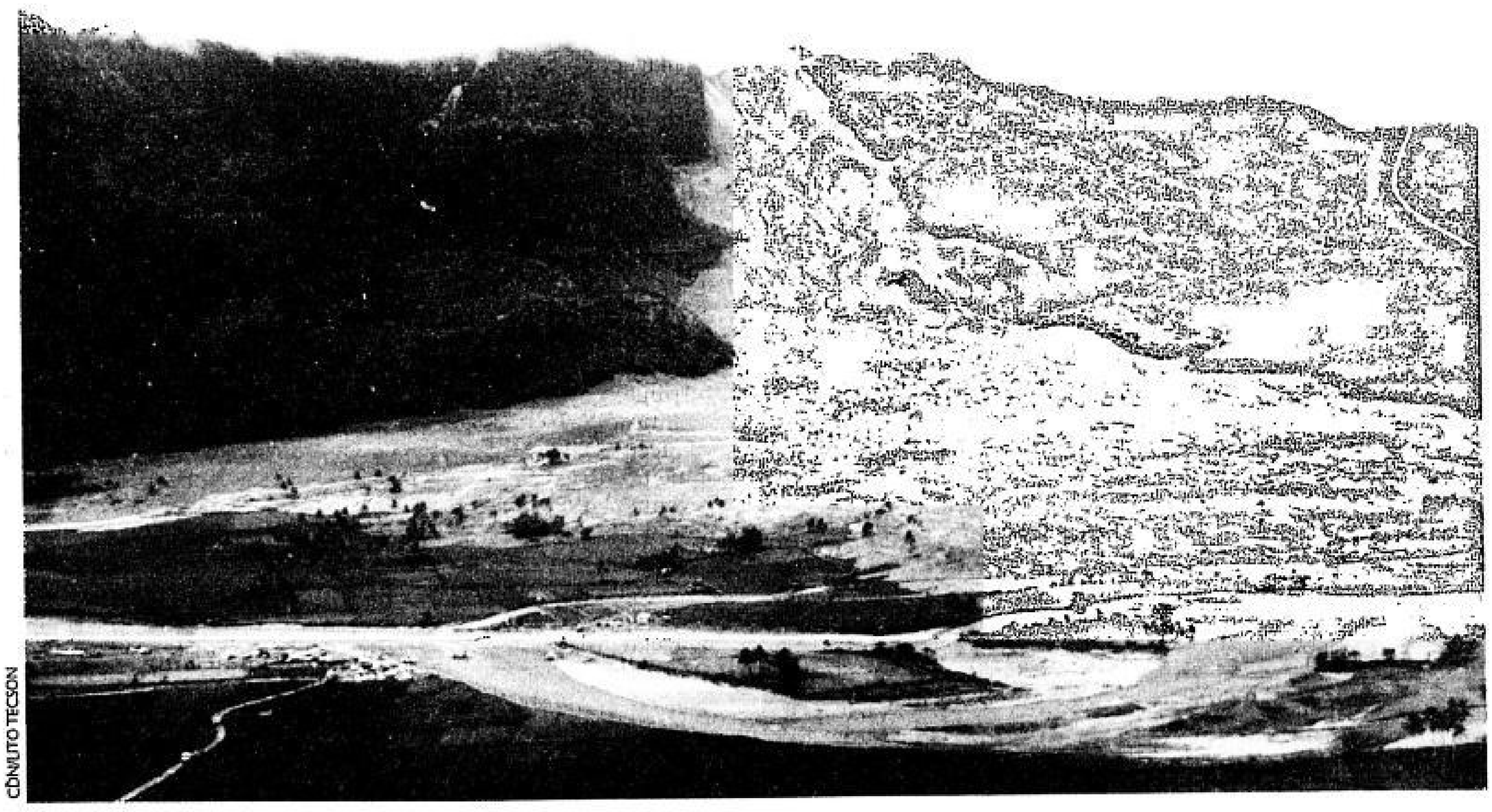
In almost all controversial cases, the (Artemio) Panganiban Supreme Court took a position contrary to the administration's, raising its credibility as the protector of people's rights. Judge Benjamin Pozon, in Makati, convicted a US Marine for rape and defied a government demand to hand over the convict to American custody in line with the Visiting Forces Agreement. Governement officials later forced the transfer of Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith to US Embassy custody, without court consent.



VIGILANTE KILLINGS RISE

Motorcycle-riding masked men continue to take the law into their own hands. Extrajudicial killings soared last year, targeting journalists, labor leaders and political activists. Over 260 killings (over 700 according to the count of human rights groups) have sparked international statements of concern; over 200 militants have "disappeared" in the past five years.

2006 Disasters, unprecedented in ferocity, unite a nation



CDNUTO TECSON

REQUIEM FOR GUINSAUGON

Not an eye was dry in the town of Saint Bernard, Southern Leyte on Feb. 17. In the farming village of Guinsaugon, 300 children and their parents had assembled at school for "Mother's Day" celebrations when a mountainside loosened by continuous heavy rains crashed and buried them alive. Filipino and American soldiers stopped their war games in Mindanao to lend a hand in the massive rescue effort. Only 152 bodies were recovered; about 1,000 missing. A huge cross now stands in the desolate mound of mud that was once Guinsaugon.

EDWIN BACASMAS

OIL SPILL IN GUIMARAS

Off scenic Guimaras Island in central Philippines, the tanker MT Solar I sank and spilled anywhere from 300,000 to 1.3 million liters of bunker fuel, the biggest oil spill yet in the country. Hundreds of families evacuated and over 10,000 fisherfolk faced million-peso losses as the sticky black oil and sickening stench washed over 200 kilometers of pristine coast. The island hosts a 1,100-hectare marine reserve and mangrove areas that are home to endangered dugongs, green sea turtles, blue crabs, giant clams, dolphins and other marine creatures.

EDWIN BACASMAS

SUPER TYPHOONS FOUR IN A ROW

Typhoons "Milenyo," "Queenie," "Reming" and "Seniang" slammed through the country's eastern flank one after the other in the last three months of the year. Preliminary reports put the typhoon death toll for the year at over 1,800 with over 2,800 injured and damage to agriculture and property topping P14 billion. Most of the casualties were in Bicol.

JOAN BONDOC

WOWOWEE: GAME PRIZES TO DIE FOR

After the stampede, 74 bodies lay dead. There was something so heartrending in the story of how 50,000 people virtually killed each other to get at the head of the line of a game show that promised money and prizes at the PhilSports arena in Pasig City on Feb. 4. The ABS-CBN network, producers of the Wowowee game show, paid hefty sums and still faces criminal charges for the deadly stampede.

More on Page A16

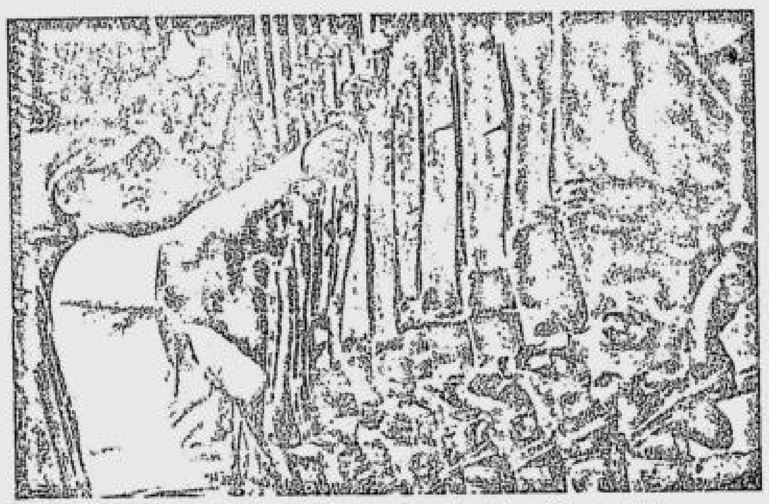
Cooling off the big bang

JUSTICE & PEACE

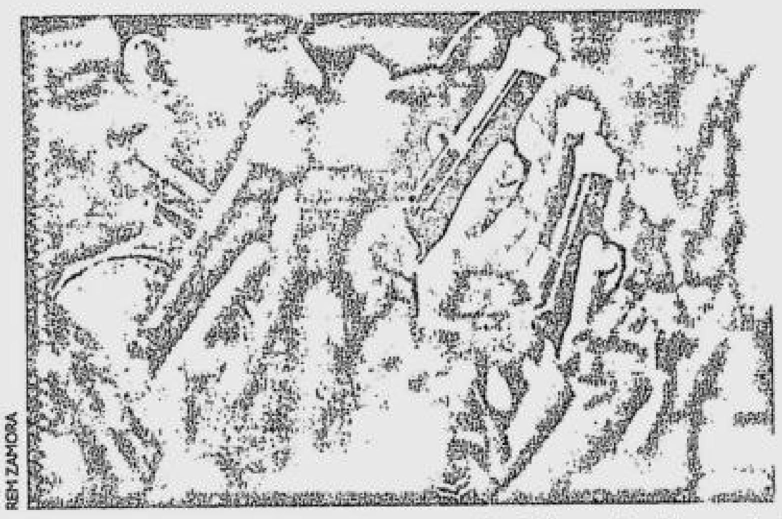
LOOKING FORWARD to a new chance at peace, prosperity—and long life JOAN BONDOC

PROMISING PIGLETS, symbols of good luck in the coming Year of the Boar, JOAN BONDOC

Over again, authorities banned strong explosives and campaigned for safer noisemakers, praying to see fewer deaths and firecracker injuries this year.



LUCKY LECHON. Having fiesta food on the New Year table is considered a propitious sign. REM ZAMORA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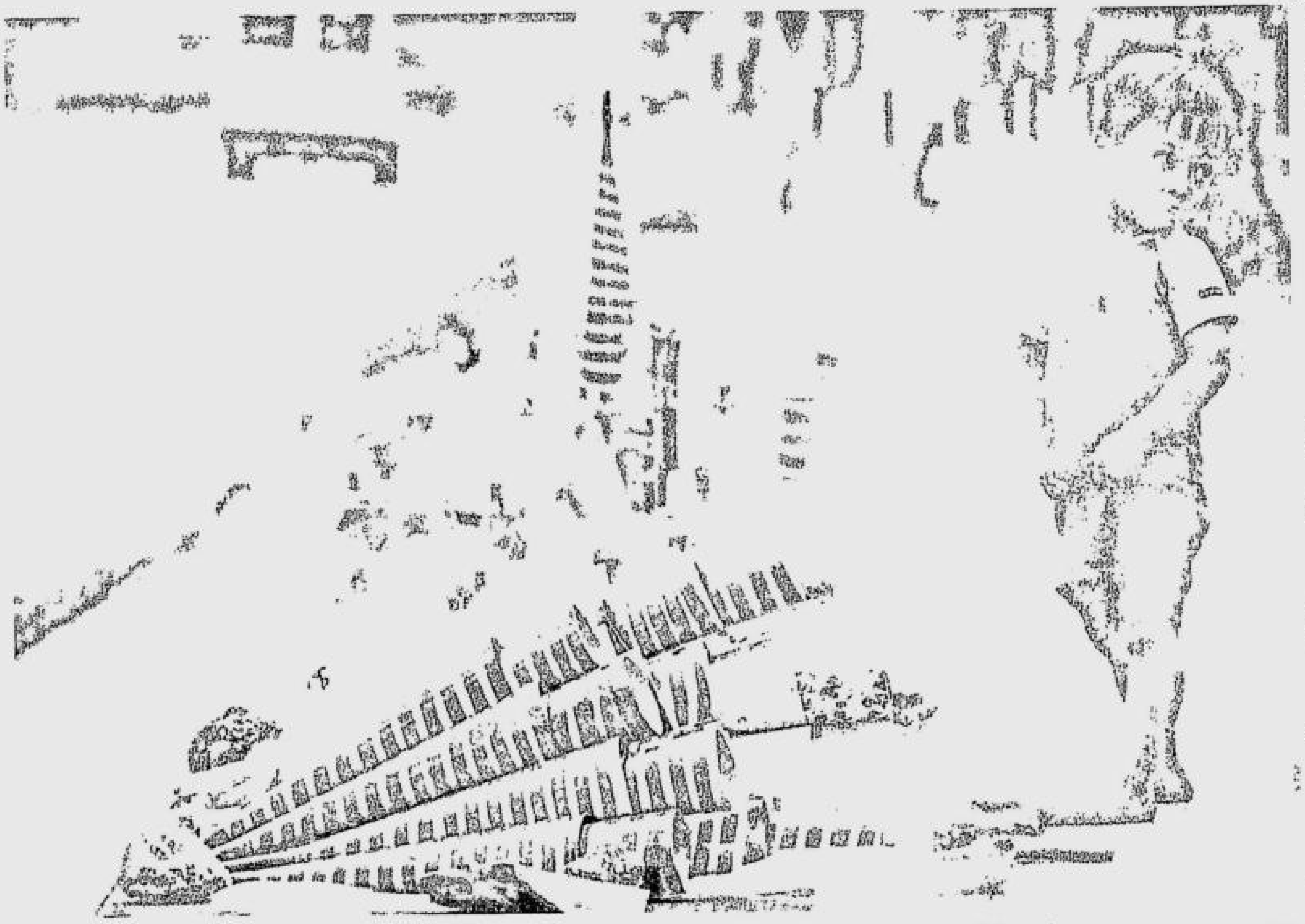
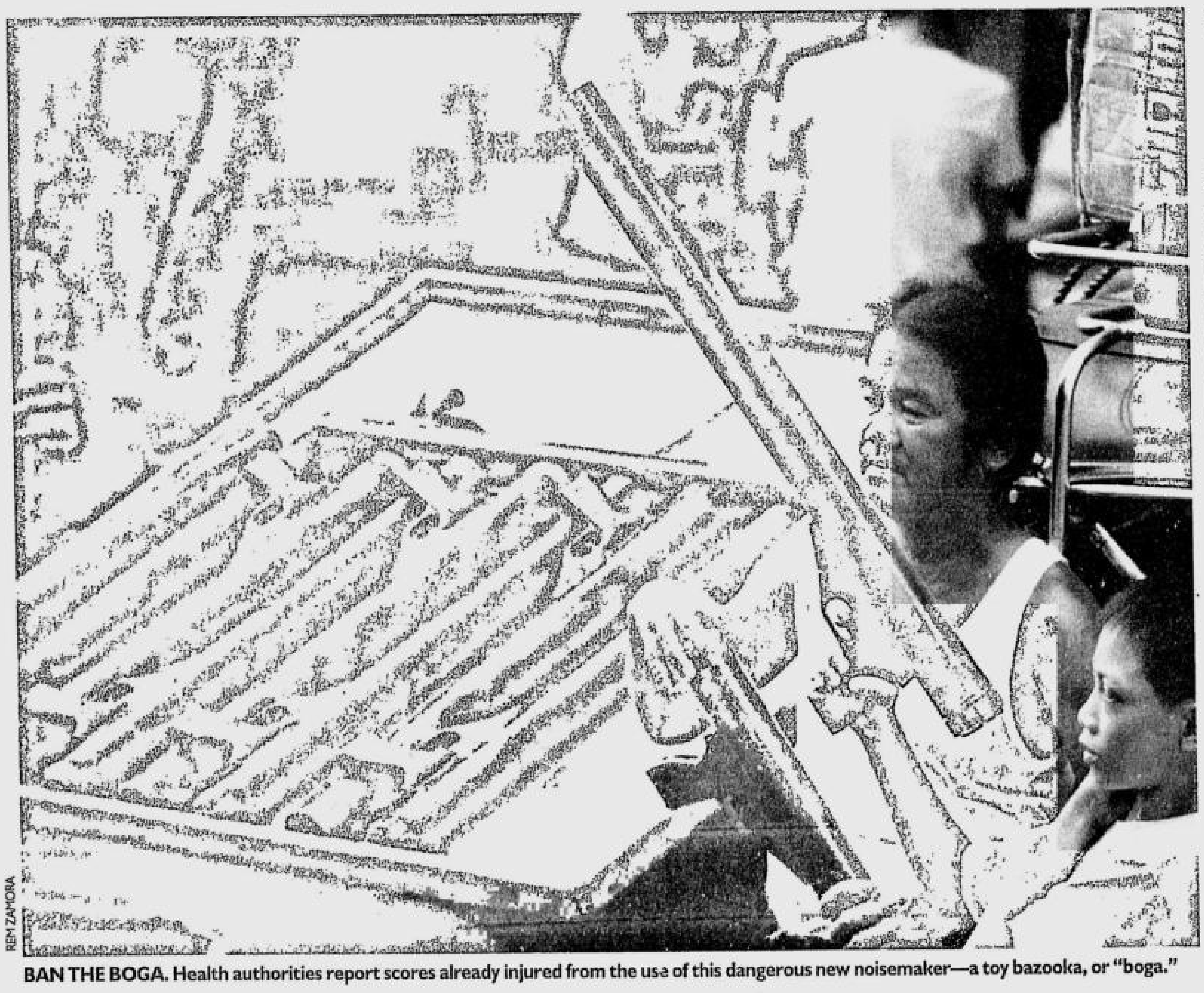
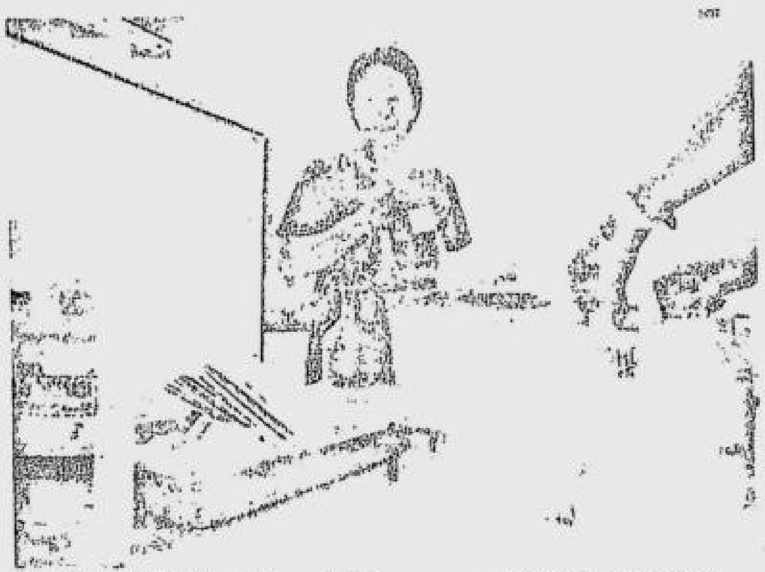


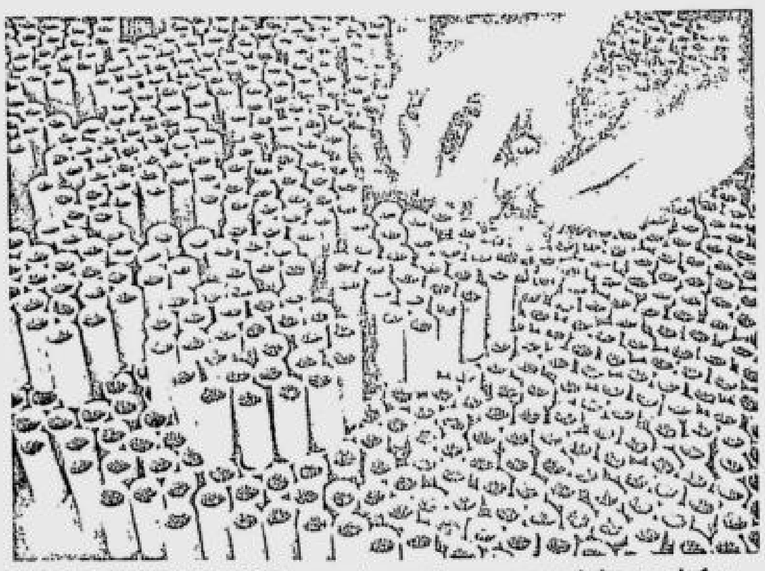
STAYING ALIVE. Ring in good fortune safely. Police authorities symbolically tape the nozzles of their guns and encourage the use of safer noisemakers like the traditional "torotot" (horns). REM ZAMORA


REM ZAMORA

BAN THE BOGA. Health authorities report scores already injured from the use of this dangerous new noisemaker—a toy bazooka, or "boga."



WHITE ALERT. Hospitals and clinics were ready for the expected deluge of people with firecracker injuries. JOAN BONDOC



EXPLOSIVE REVELRY. Firecracker makers prepared the goods for the New Year big bang. RAFFY LERMA

Toy guns part of structure of violence

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE GUNS STACKED ON THE SIDEWALK outside a public market in Valenzuela have the polish and suave finish of real 45-caliber pistols.

Though not as heavy as the real thing, they're just as big, replete with a regular-size trigger, thumb safety lock and magazine.

Not far from the gun pile is a heap of related toys: China-made plastic soldiers, tanks, police cars and camouflage uniforms—not to mention stacks of the "boga," dangerous toy bazookas using plastic pipes.

For anti-gun advocate Nandy Pacheco, anyone wondering why Filipinos never seem to learn from the big number of firecracker and stray bullet injuries and deaths needs only to look more closely at these familiar market sights.

"The structures of violence are always there so what can you expect?" he told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Pacheco, head of the advocacy group Gunless Society, is convinced that until an honest-to-goodness, government-led effort is made to dismantle all these "structures," campaigns to minimize injuries during New Year festivities are bound to fail.

"What we have are piecemeal solutions to a very serious problem," he said, noting the annual campaign to keep law enforcers from using their service firearms by taping the muzzle of their guns.

"It's all for a show, we don't have to propagandize this campaign."

Such tapes can easily be tampered with, he said, adding that a more serious effort would be to order policemen and soldiers to deposit their guns in a vault for a specific period.

Even before New Year's Eve revelry, from Dec. 21 to 28, the Department of Health (DOH) has already recorded 205 injuries, a significant increase from the 109 injuries during the same period in 2005, said Dr. Enrique Tayag, the chief epidemiologist.

Ten of these cases were related to stray bullets. One of the victims, a woman in Metro Manila, died.

Last year, during festivities to welcome 2006, authorities recorded 19 cases involving stray bullets, a marked decrease from the 33 cases registered when Filipinos greeted 2005.

For Pacheco, a good start to solve the familiar problem of gunfire injuries is to convince the public, especially policy makers, that "people who want a non-violent society should also be non-violent."

"We have to face the truth that guns are made to kill and maim, not to prolong life," he said.

Besides guns, the DOH expressed fresh concern over the use of the "boga," an improvised bazooka triggered with denatured alcohol.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III yesterday asked the Philippine National Police to ban these items, considering that the DOH had already recorded 30 injuries because of them during the Dec. 21 to 27 period.

"The cases are very high considering that it's only been two years since these items became popular," he told the INQUIRER.

Duque said he was also seeking a prohibition on the firecracker "piccolo," which injured 23 people during the same period.

Besides "boga" and "piccolo," the leading source of injury from firecrackers were "five star" (22 cases), "whistle bomb" (15) and "triangulo" (14).

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MILF slams bomb raps

COTABATO CITY—The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has protested the filing of charges against 23 of its commanders and members in connection with the Oct. 10 bomb attack in Makilala, North Cotabato, that killed eight people.

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said the group was surprised by the filing because it had been agreed upon with the government that the charges would be dropped.

"It was agreed [upon] before that all MILF [members] included in the case, not only (chair Murad Ebrahim), would be removed from the list," Kabalu said.

Among those also charged by the government were Kule Mamagong, alias Ustadz Kule; Hadji Akmad Bayam; Biznar Salahudin; Daud Sarip; Atti Lintungan, alias Ustadz Atti; Samsudin Demaalo, alias Commander Platon Blah; Ahmad Akmad Batabol Usman, alias Abdulbasit or Basit Usman; Zahide Abdul, alias Zabiri Abdul or Bedz; and Usman al Majad.

"We had nothing to do with the bombing as what we had said before. This is a form of harassment. We are protesting [this]," Kabalu said.

At least eight people were killed and 28 wounded when a bomb exploded near the town hall of Makilala at 8 p.m. Oct. 10.

The explosion occurred at the town plaza which was crowded with people celebrating Makilala's 52nd anniversary.

Makilala Mayor Onofre Respicio then had said an unidentified man had left a package at a stall minutes before the explosion.

But Kidapawan City prosecutor Al Calica has said he found strong evidence that the 23 MILF officers and members had helped Indonesian militants Dulmatin and Omar Patek launch the attack. *Jeoffrey Maitem*

EU welcomes Bulgaria and Romania

Another milestone is celebrated on 1 January 2007 as the European Union welcomes two member states, Bulgaria and Romania.

This latest enlargement of the European Union will enrich the EU all the more as cultural diversity is increased and ideas are interchanged. The extension of the zone of peace, stability and prosperity in Europe will enhance the security of all its peoples. The increase in the population of the EU (to 488 million) will help boost economic growth and create more jobs translating into a better quality of life for citizens throughout Europe.

Enlargement also continues to strengthen the Union's role in world affairs in foreign and security policy, trade policy and other fields of global governance.

Enlarging European Union

Stages of Accession

18 April 1951 - Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands ('the Six') sign Treaty establishing European Coal and Steel Community (Treaty of Paris)
January 1973 - Accession of UK, Denmark and Ireland
January 1981 - Greece becomes 10th Member State
January 1986 - Spain and Portugal join Community, bringing membership to 12
January 1993 - Single market largely completed
November 1993 - Treaty on European Union enters into force
January 1995 - Austria, Finland and Sweden join EU (EU-15)
May 2004 - The EU enlarged further with the accession of 10 countries: Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovak Republic. (EU-25)
January 2007 - Romania and Bulgaria join EU (EU-27)

The future of the European Union:

Croatia and Turkey are formal "candidate countries" with which accession negotiations started in October 2005. Accession negotiations have not started yet with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia since it was granted the status of "candidate country" by the European Council in December 2005.

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of 10 June 1999 are potential candidate countries. Their progress towards being recognized as candidates depends on their engagement in the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP).

Benefits of Enlargement of the European Union to Non-EU Countries like the Philippines

Enlargement will create an even larger market than before, allowing freer movement of goods and services; it will extend the single set of rules for business to a wider area; and it will raise the standard of rules in force across the region. As a result, there will be many new opportunities for Philippine business.

Non-EU countries will benefit from a bigger Single Market and simplified and enhanced access to the markets of the new Member States.

- In trade terms, there are currently no internal borders between the Member States of the EU and the harmonization of regulations and standards ensures a freer circulation of goods and services than is possible within some non-EU countries. Enlargement will automatically extend these characteristics to the acceding countries.
- The EU will reinforce its position as the biggest consumer market among developed countries.

Enlargement will extend the EU's trade policy regime to the acceding countries. The current system, featuring a single trade regime for the EU and a different regime for each of the future Member States, will disappear. A single set of trade rules, a single tariff, and a single set of administrative procedures will apply right across the enlarged Union. This will greatly simplify the dealings of Philippine operators within the EU.

- Beyond the simplification of procedures, enlargement will bring a range of immediate and tangible economic benefits to the Philippines. These will arise out of the accession countries adopting the same open standard of treatment of third countries that the current EU applies.
- The "one standard for all" principle of the single market on technical regulations will be extended to the acceding countries.

The high standard of treatment currently afforded to investors in the EU will be applicable throughout the enlarged Union. Freedom of establishment for inward investors will be extended to the new Member States. This means that the right of establishment and free movement of capital will be applicable to all companies set up in the new Member States, irrespective of their ownership.

- Investors will receive enhanced levels of intellectual property rights (IPR) protection in the new Member States due to these countries' adoption of EU Directives in this field.
- No accession country is a member of the WTO's Government Procurement Agreement (GPA). Upon accession, all new Member States will automatically be subject to the GPA via membership of the European Community, and they will apply the EC legislation on public procurement

What is in it for the Philippines?

- The EU will remain an open market for the Philippines and it will have become bigger and offer more possibilities.
- The Philippines will benefit from a lower common customs tariff in the new Member States.
- With accession, the new Member States will lose their transition economy status and become part of the Common Customs Union. As a result they will have to offer preferential tariffs to third countries in line with the EU GSP scheme. This means, again lower duties for Philippine exporters in the enlarged EU.

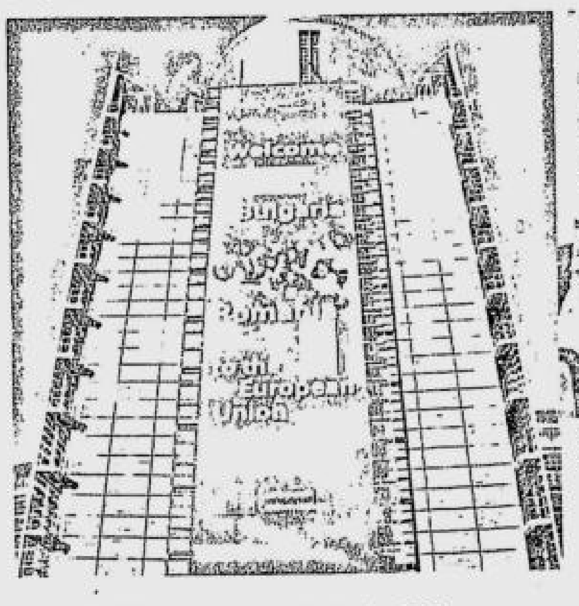
The benefits of enlargement are not limited to the Member States of the enlarged Union, but will also go to non-EU countries that have healthy economic relations with the EU.

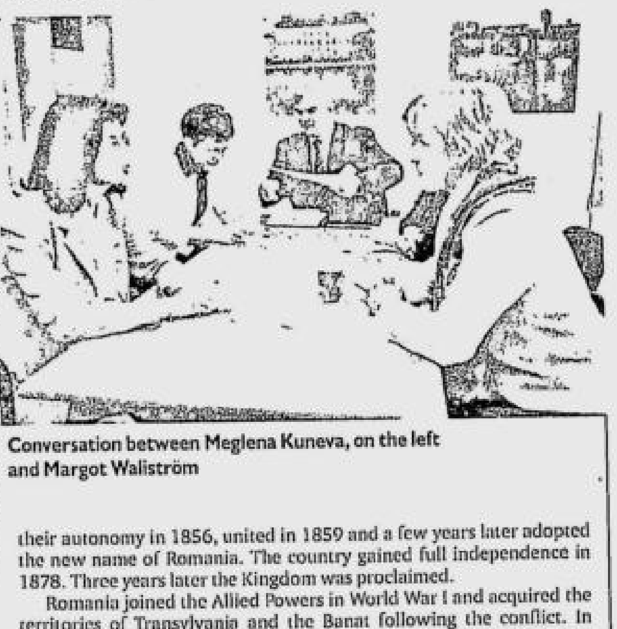
In addition to economic growth and job creation in both current and new Member States, the enlargement project will also promote cultural diversity and a better understanding of other peoples.

More important, though, is the fact that enlargement of the EU is progressively reuniting the continent, divided in the aftermath of the last world war, and thereby contributing to peace and security in the wider region.

Diplomatic Representations of Romania and Bulgaria in the Philippines

Bulgaria does not have any embassy in the Philippines but it has an office at 5-36-3 Yoyogi, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, Japan 151-0053. His Excellency Ambassador Blagovest Sendov is accredited in the Philippines. Romania is represented in the Philippines at 1216 Acacia Road, Dasmariñas Village Makati.





Conversation between Meglena Kuneva, on the left and Margot Walström

Bulgaria

Official Name - Republic of Bulgaria
Population - 7.97 million
Area - 110,993.6 km²

The Bulgarian State was restored in 1878. Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Bulgarian Prince since 1887, proclaimed Bulgaria's independence from Turkey and in 1908 became king of Bulgaria. Bulgaria took part in the First Balkan War (1912). In the subsequent war among the allies (1913). Bulgaria was defeated. The intervention of Bulgaria in World War I on the side of the Central Powers led to severe losses (Source: http://www.government.bg 14.12.2005).

The interwar years were characterized by social problems, communist uprisings and economic crises. In September 1923 thousands of agrarian and communist agitators were killed in a reactionary campaign. Bulgaria sided with Germany at the outbreak of WWII, but towards the end of WWII, Bulgaria sided with the Soviet Union. In 1944, the Soviet Army entered Bulgaria and the Fatherland Front Government came to power.

Bulgaria was proclaimed a People's Republic in 1946. Todor Zhivkov became Communist Party general secretary in 1954 and remained head of the Communist Party until 1989, the longest serving leader in the Soviet bloc. Bulgarian troops took part in the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The date 10 November 1989 marked the beginning of transition to democracy in Bulgaria. The 1990's were years of political and economic turmoil. The Bulgarian Socialist Party (originating in the former Communist party) won the free Parliamentary elections amidst the economic crisis, but the Government resigned due to mass demonstrations and general strike.

Bulgarian Minister for European Affairs, Mr. Kuneva & VP of the European Commission, Mr. Waliström.

The new Constitution was adopted in 1991. In 1992 Zhelyu Zhelev became the first democratically elected President. The former Communist leader Todor Zhivkov was sentenced to seven years in prison for corruption in office in 1992 (the sentence was later overturned) (Source: BBC News Timeline Bulgaria www.bbc.co.uk 26.4.2005)).

The mass privatization programme, which began in 1993, marked the beginning of the transition to a market economy.

In 1994, a year later, the Socialist Party returned to power. The economic crisis led to mass protests in the winter 1996/97 and the establishment of the UDF government under Prime Minister Ivan Kostov. The former King Simeon II's party, National Movement Simeon II (NMS), won the parliamentary elections in 2001. Winner of the latest parliamentary elections of 25 June 2005 was the Socialist-led Coalition for Bulgaria (BSP).

The present Constitution provides for a multi-party parliamentary system and free elections and separates the legislative, the executive and the judicial power.

The 240-seat National Assembly, or Parliament, is vested with the legislative power. The Members of Parliament are directly elected for a 4-year term on the basis of proportional representation. Parties and political coalitions need 4 percent of the popular vote to qualify. The President serves as Head of State, and is directly elected every 5 years for a maximum of two-terms. President Georgi Parvanov was elected in January 2002 and was re-elected in October 2006.

What can Bulgaria bring to the EU?

In the last couple of years Bulgaria's real GDP growth exceeded 5% /GDP growth for the first half of 2006 is 6,1%/. Macroeconomic stability, progress in structural reforms raised the country's attractiveness to foreign investors, and Bulgaria recorded EUR 9.4bn FDI inflow in 2000-2005, an average of 8.8% to GDP on an annual basis. The share of the private sector stood at 68, 2% of GDP in 2005. And in July this year unemployment dropped to 9%, the lowest level recorded since 1991. This robust economic growth continues currently and is expected to remain high in the next years. The volume of trade between Bulgaria and the Union is increasing significantly and this trend is set to continue.

As a full member of the EU Bulgaria has the potential to contribute actively to the European efforts in the region of Southeastern Europe. The primary goal of Bulgaria will be to establish the Balkans as a zone of peace and security in the European continent. In the economic aspect - Bulgaria has a dynamic economy, provides attractive investment opportunities and business environment; in the historical and cultural aspect - Bulgaria will bring new features to the European identity as a cradle of ancient civilizations and the birthplace of the Cyrillic alphabet and nowadays as a model of ethnic tolerance on the Balkans.

Bulgaria, as an EU member will also heavily contribute to tackle more effectively common trans-national problems such as organized crime, money-laundering and illegal migration. It will also contribute to consolidate further good neighborhood relations and reduce the risk of regional conflicts.

Romania

Official Name - Romania
Population - 21.7 million
Area - 238,391 km²

For centuries the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia were under the sovereignty of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. They secured their autonomy in 1856, united in 1859 and a few years later adopted the new name of Romania. The country gained full independence in 1878. Three years later the Kingdom was proclaimed.

Romania joined the Allied Powers in World War I and acquired the territories of Transylvania and the Banat following the conflict. In 1940 the country allied with the Axis powers and ceded territory to Hungary and the USSR after the signing of the German-Soviet pact. It participated in the 1941 German invasion of the USSR but switched sides three years later as Soviet forces closed in.

The post-war Soviet occupation led to the formation of a communist "people's republic" in 1947 and the abdication of the king. In 1955, Romania joined Warsaw Pact. The rule of Nicolae Ceaucescu, who took power in 1965, and his Securitate Police state became increasingly oppressive through the 1980s.

After a bloody revolution in 1989, former communist party officials dominated the government until 1996 and for four years as of 2000. In March 2004 Romania was admitted to NATO and concluded in December 2004 the accession negotiations for EU membership.

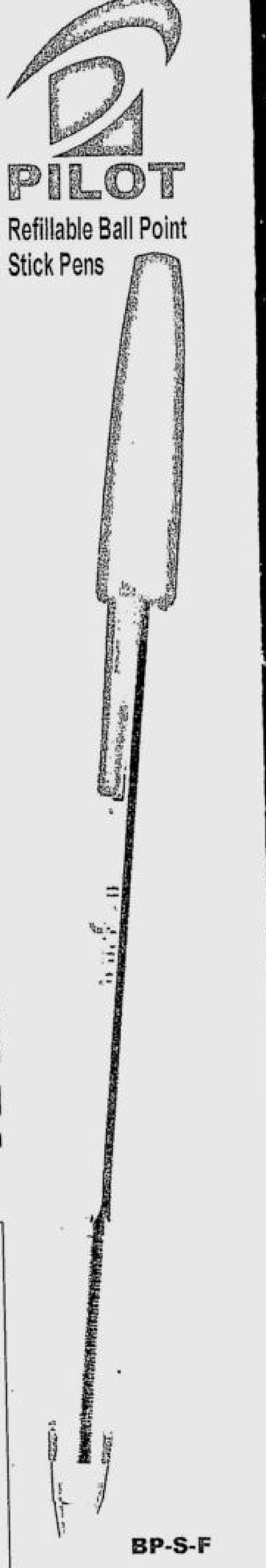
According to the Constitution, the Romanian State is a Republic, a sovereign, independent, unitary and indivisible National State. The new version of this Act has been ratified in a referendum in 2003 to bring Romanian law into line with EU acquis as part of the process for EU accession. It was also considered as a referendum on EU accession since new provisions for "sharing sovereignty" within the EU were introduced.

Will the EU benefit from Romania's membership?

The accession of Romania will contribute to strengthening EU presence in the Balkans, the Black Sea region and the Southern Caucasus and therefore it will help to secure political stability, democracy, respect of human rights and minority rights in this part of the world. This is of great importance for the European Communities which, in the Preamble to the Treaty establishing the European Community, call upon all European nations to join in the efforts to preserve and strengthen peace and liberty. It is also in line with EU principles common to all Member States, i.e. liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and of the rule of law.

EU membership will contribute towards making the democratic reforms in Romania irreversible and therefore creating a community of democratic nations and preserving peace in South East Europe, particularly in the fragile Western Balkans. Crucial here is the role that Romania plays in this part of the continent: we can mention Romania's traditionally good relations with Belgrade, close political and economic ties with Moldova bolstered by ethnic and linguistic affinity, membership of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSCE) and the OSCE or participation in the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

Romania, as an EU member will also heavily contribute to tackle more effectively common transnational problems such as organized crime, money-laundering and illegal migration. It will also contribute to consolidate further good neighborhood relations and reduce the risk of regional conflicts.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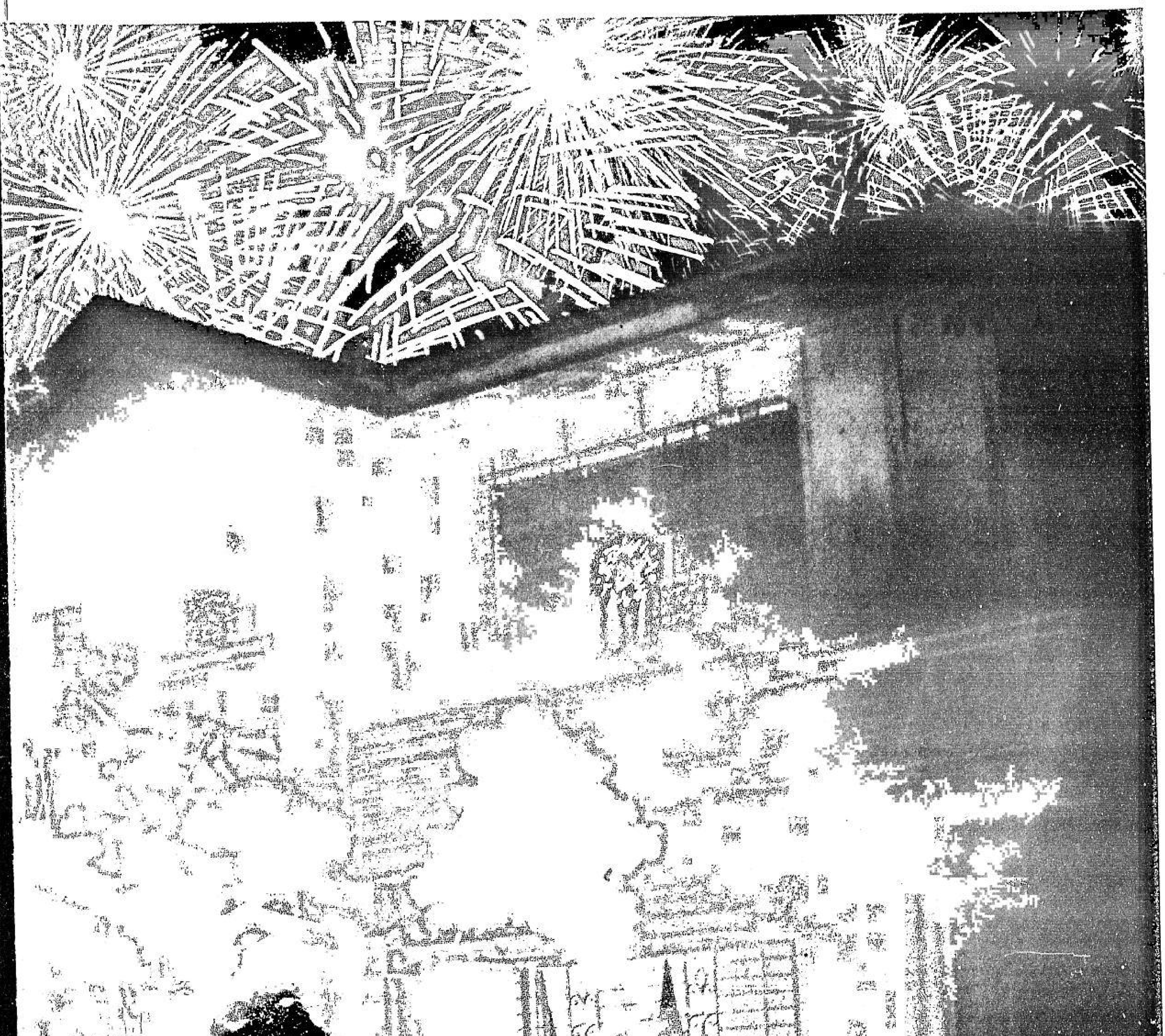
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Rapist's justice

EDITORIAL

LIKE A HANGING, THE MIDDLE-OF-THE-NIGHT transfer of convicted rapist Daniel Smith from the Makati City Jail to the US Embassy last Friday clarifies the mind. It allows us to see what is really at stake in the whole custody issue: Not the future of Philippine-American relations, but the future of the rule of law.

We can survive as a nation without the help of the Americans, if it comes to that. But we cannot survive without the rule of law. President Macapagal-Arroyo's decision to transfer custody of Lance Corporal Smith—without clearance from the Court of Appeals, and in direct defiance of a standing order of Makati Regional Trial Court Judge Benjamin Pozon—was an act of calculated political expediency; it was meant to please the Americans. But her hospitality did not only sacrifice national dignity at the altar of convenience; it also broke the law.

Worse, it encourages disrespect for the law. It reveals yet again the disturbing pattern of behavior—call it the impunity of incumbency—that has marked the conduct of the Arroyo administration in legal matters since the President's crisis of legitimacy erupted in 2005. This pattern is clear to anyone with eyes to see; but for the benefit of Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol, who insists on the virtues of blindness, allow us to explain it in terms even he can understand.

There is a standing order to keep Smith, the American Marine who was convicted of raping the Filipina known as "Nicole" during a tumultuous night in Subic, detained in the Makati City Jail—"until further orders from this court."

There is an existing appeal pending with the Court of Appeals, seeking a reconsideration of its decision upholding Judge Pozon's order. In other words, the first attempt to overturn the order was already denied.

There is a reasonable basis for the two courts' reading of the appropriate provision of the Visiting Forces Agreement: that conviction or acquittal at the trial court level must already constitute completion of "all judicial proceedings." To argue otherwise is to allow a convicted American soldier to remain in US custody until all appeals are exhausted, a process which can take years and a privilege which is not granted to convicted Filipinos.

Not least, there is the question of jurisdiction: The legal issue is already with the courts; the executive cannot simply shove the judges aside and insist on the course of action it likes.

Clear as daylight. But two weeks ago, Apostol already laid the predicate for the illegal midnight transfer. "We are the jailer so we can decide where to detain a convicted criminal," Apostol said then. If the President ordered the transfer, he blithely added, the courts wouldn't be able to do anything except "cite the executive department for contempt."

(We have a better suggestion: The Supreme Court can disbar any lawyer who openly mocks the judiciary's necessarily limited capacity to enforce its rules.)

Apostol's advice—and the outrageous rationalization offered by Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno and Undersecretary Marius Corpus, who effected Smith's transfer, that the move was in fact in compliance with Pozon's order—betrays the true character of the Arroyo administration. It prizes power over reason, the politics of convenience over the rule of law.

It is this same administration which sought to curtail civil liberties through Presidential Proclamation 1017, cut the country's storied legacy of free assembly short through the calibrated preemptive response policy, place public officials beyond the reach of accountability through Executive Order 464—and make a mockery of the Constitution's direct democracy provisions by sponsoring a "people's" initiative. (All four actions, for different reasons, have since been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.)

The same spirit of expediency animates other initiatives that will forever be associated with this administration, such as the "prejudicial questions" sleight of hand that spooked the first impeachment complaint against the President. They are all marked by the same attitude to law: What is legal is what we can get away with.

This is not the rule of law, but rapist's justice.

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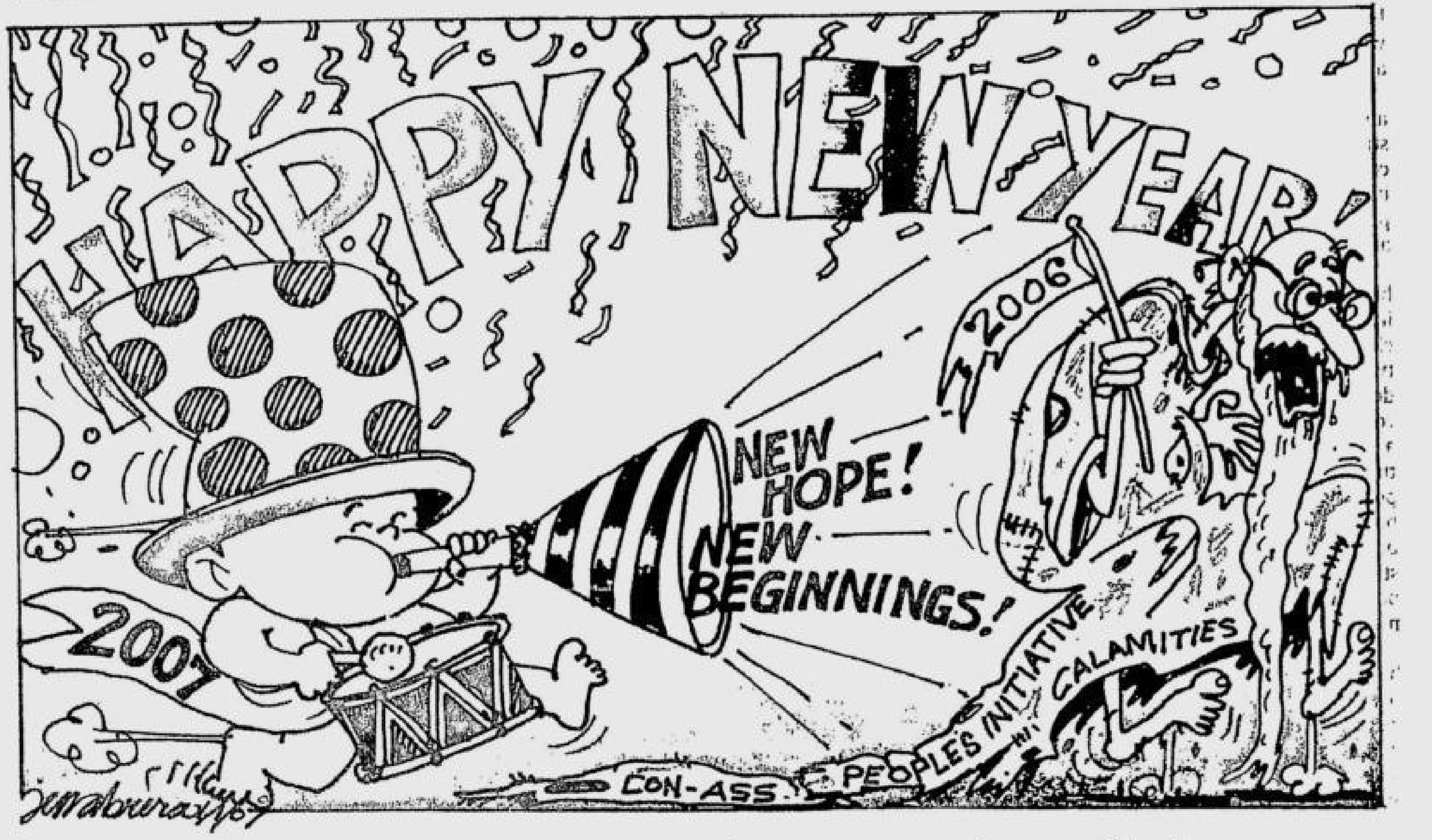

They all want so much to continue living

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

HERE'S WISHING EVERYBODY—AND I mean everybody—a Happy New Year!

New year means new life; we begin the cycle again. And for me, there is no better symbol of new life than the trees in my front yard.

There are two young fire trees in my front yard (there's another bigger, older one in the back yard) and they already bloom with profuse red-orange blossoms every summer. I was expecting them to be on fire again this summer, but supertyphoon "Milenyo" arrived before Christmas.

As the typhoon raged around us, I was looking out the windows at the trees. There is a huge acacia tree right in front of the house and I was worried that it would topple on to the house. But luckily, the direction of the wind was from behind the house. Thus the acacia tree was shielded somewhat. The fire trees, however, were exposed to the full force of the wind. I could see their branches bowing and swaying in the wind, and the leaves furiously being blown away, but I was hoping they would weather the storm, literally.

Then there was a loud crack and when I looked again, there they were flat across the street, the tips of the branches draped over the fence of the house across. "Oops, there they go!" I said. They looked like boxers knocked out during a bout, their roots dangling in the blowing wind. I thought that was the end of those fire trees.

Not quite. The maintenance workers came right away when the wind died down and cut the branches with chainsaws to clear the street. After the last branch was cut off, the two trunks suddenly stood again like groggy boxers at the count of nine. When the weight of the branches had been removed, the tension of the roots still anchored to the ground took over and pulled the trunks upright. The workers jumped away in surprise, laughing at the trees' fighting spirit.

For days the trunks stood there like headless statues. I thought they have been counted out by the referee. Then one day, I noticed tiny buds peeking out of the bark. Every day, more buds came out, and those that came out earlier would burst with tiny light green shoots that unfurled bigger and bigger every day. Those trees love life so much. They want to continue living.

Now the trees have a healthy crop of profuse green leaves—like a cancer-stricken girl who had lost all her hair from chemotherapy and now has a new head of hair growing. I can hardly wait to see how big their new branches would be this summer.

Meanwhile, the workers had chopped the trunks of trees blown down by the typhoon into three-foot long pieces and buried them upright across the front of the vacant lots beside my house as a sort of fence. Now they too have burst out with shoots. They, too, want so much to live.

That's not the only symbol of new life this new year. The typhoon had blown down many electric posts, and it was dark, dark, dark in our village for several nights. But that was a blessing in disguise. On the very first night of the blackout, we had new lights twinkling and flitting in the vacant lots and, I presume, also in the park across the street. In fact, a few of them got inside the house as though looking for a Christmas tree to light up. Fireflies!

What a blessing. Many people tell me they haven't ever seen fireflies in their lives, and here fireflies were putting on a show right after a storm—as if to say "every storm has its bright side." I suppose those fireflies have always been there but we didn't notice them because the bright electric lights made them invisible. But with the lights out, the fireflies became visible. In fact, every time there is a brief brownout, I see a few of them flitting about.

We have a park full of trees, with a concrete path winding among the trees, a tiny brook burbling by with three bridges over it at different sections. During bright moonlit nights, it is nice to go on a stroll beneath the trees. The moonlight filters through the leaves and the sound of the gurgling water gives the area a romantic air.

I suppose fireflies are always there ready to put on a show, but the bright street lights around the park overpower their tiny lights. So I am thinking of proposing to the homeowners' association to turn off the street lights around the park during bright moonlit nights by having Meralco install a separate switch for them. We should encourage the fireflies to go forth and multiply and gladden our hearts with their twinkling lights. And homeowners will enjoy the park more, which will be so different from the hullabaloo and bright lights of the shopping malls.

The storm had also tousled the branches of trees, broken off some of them, flattened the grass and weeds and, I presume, laid havoc on the homes of the birds and insects living among them. In fact, I had seen fragments of nests and feathers under the trees and I wondered what happened to the birdlings or eggs in them.

But apparently, the birds weathered the storm with flying feathers. The *mayas* are as noisy again as usual, scattering the food pellets for the dogs around the feeding bowls. I see two new gray birds with long tails, hopping along the terrace, pecking at the dog pellets. And I hear the coo-cooing of a pigeon somewhere when I wake up in the morning.

And every day I watch tiny white butterflies flitting among the blades of grass and weeds now growing healthily again. I sit on a tree stump in the shade, and watch and see what you usually can't see unless you sit patiently and watch closely: insects of various shapes, sizes and colors bustling about with new life. Even tinier butterflies, ladybugs, flies, beetles, ants and worms—all creeping, crawling, flying, hopping, walking, all busy with the serious business of living.

Stamped

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

BRITAIN HAS PRETTY MUCH BESTOWED upon them all the honors any Brit can get in a lifetime, including making them knights of the realm. They are John, Paul, George and Ringo, otherwise known as the Beatles. They do not require family names, the first names are enough to identify them. Now Britain has decided to give them the ultimate honor—in the case of two of them, John and George, past their lifetimes. That is to make them postage stamps.

The stamps feature covers of Beatles albums in the original vinyl in which they came out. They are irregularly shaped, jagged at the edges, the picture at front lying on stacks of other Beatles albums. The stamps, says the Royal Mail, mean to "celebrate the Beatles' extraordinary cultural contribution to Britain."

I couldn't be happier. Though it's not without irony that the Beatles have become an official feature of British post at a time when fewer and fewer people are using paper-based mail, or "snail mail." I've always associated the Beatles with the experimental and cutting edge, blazing paths and leading the way. But no matter, it is still a huge honor.

But the Beatles' cultural contributions go way beyond the isles off Calais to extend far across the seas. I myself grew up on the Beatles. The '60s when the Beatles exploded into the scene, musical and otherwise, were my elementary (Grades 2 to 6), high school and college years (1st and 2nd). Which is to say that they were around pretty much throughout my school life. They were companion, comfort, and guide. In quite a long voyage of discovery that began with the innocent and exuberant "She loves you yeah, yeah, yeah," and ended with the bittersweet and emotionally expansive "Let It Be."

I've since listened to other things. I've listened to (and loved) all kinds of music, from opera to rock (and its hybrid rock opera), from jazz to New Age, from standards to sub-standards. I've even listened intently to punk, particularly when my kid took to it at one point in his high school life: We used to go to Claro M. Recto, which is punk heaven, a particular enclave there shaped like a "U" selling everything from T-shirts of the Sex Pistols et al. to various punk paraphernalia. Hell, I've even listened to techno and "emo." I can't imagine a world without music—I've always thought Herbert Von Karajan's version of Beethoven's Ninth was as near to heaven as you could get on earth. A world without music is the end of all life, at least as I know it.

But the Beatles will always have a special place in my heart.

That the British Royal Mail has turned the Beatles into postage stamps is well past due. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think Jamaica has already done that to Bob Marley. The honor is more than richly earned in the Beatles' case. I don't know of any group, nearly five decades removed, that still sounds as contemporary today as they did during their time. That is the greatest honor that can be bestowed upon anyone; more than medals, or knighthood, or gracing the mail, that one is listened to across generations apart from across borders, across time apart from across space. I've never ceased to be amazed that the crowd that squeezes itself into 70s Bistro during its Beatles nights is made up largely of the 20s and below and not my generation.

When I was growing up in the '60s, the songs of Frank Sinatra, or heaven forbid those of Rosemary Clooney et al., did not have that kind of effect on us. Yet they were only two or three decades removed from us. For all practical purposes, they might as well have been a century so. The Beatles are five generations removed from this one, yet my own kids and their friends know the Beatles songs as well as I. Time Magazine's panel of judges was right to pick Lennon-McCartney as the most influential songwriters of the 20th century, besting even Cole Porter and the Gershwin brothers.

There's even a new Beatles album in the market, "Love," which consists of Beatles songs arranged by George Martin originally for the legendary Cirque du Soleil. Martin, of course, is the "fifth" Beatle, the fellow who made the orchestral arrangements on the Beatles' songs and steered Paul McCartney into the classical path. (Lennon didn't like straying too far from his rock-and-roll roots, and said so.) "Love" has had mixed reviews. I personally found some of the (re)arrangements glorious, but unless you're a Beatles fan, I don't know that you'll find much that's new in it. But long after they broke up 35 years ago, the Beatles continue to make (musical) waves.

From where I stand (with much weaker knees) though, their songs have taken on added meanings, some of them as wryly ironic as their own humor. Last year, I wanted to write about Paul McCartney turning 64 (June 18), but I got waylaid by one thing and another. McCartney, of course, wrote "When I'm 64," which came out in "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" in 1967. He was a young man then, pledging eternal love to a loved one, imagining how cozy things would be when they got to be that age. One month before McCartney got to be 64, he separated from Heather Mills, and is currently locked in bitter divorce proceedings with her. Alas, life doesn't always imitate art. It did offer me whole new vistas from which to view the innocence of my youth and the guilt of my age.

Quite incidentally, I wonder what kind of surprises life will spring on Paul Simon on Oct. 13, 2011. By then, he will turn 70. I still remember his lines in "Old Friends" (from the 1968 album "Bookends"): "Old friends, sat on the park bench like bookends ... How terribly strange to be 70 ...." But that's another story.

Kind of floods you with memories. Kind of makes you feel old and young at the same time.

Happy New Year, everyone.

Constitutional Convention in 2007?

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

THE MOVEMENT TOWARD CHARTER CHANGE refuses to die. But what Charter change needs is not speed but careful deliberation in an atmosphere of mutual respect. If we have to face it, the crucial questions to ask are: What changes must be made? How do we achieve the changes? And when should they be made? All three questions are intimately linked with each other.

Changes can be achieved through initiative and referendum, or through Congress as a constituent assembly, or through a constitutional convention. Initiative and referendum is very limited in its usefulness. It can be used only for simple changes of individual provisions which do not affect other provisions.

Theoretically, Congress as a constituent assembly or a constitutional convention has the authority to formulate and propose minor and major changes. But there are important differences between the two which must be considered when deciding which method to choose. In terms of cost, a constituent assembly is less expensive than a constitutional convention. Supporting a constitutional convention would be equivalent to supporting a second and, perhaps, larger legislative body. However, Congress, aside from not having been elected for the purpose of revising the Constitution, consists of people who currently hold political power and might be less inclined to make changes that can diminish their power.

A constitutional convention, on the other hand, consists of members chosen by the sovereign people precisely for the purpose of reviewing an existing constitution. The constitutional convention law which will prescribe the manner of electing or appointing the delegates and the qualifications needed for membership can set parameters which can assure, to the extent humanly possible, that the delegates will act with independence and unselfish concern for the welfare of the nation. Indeed, delegates might already harbor in their hearts the ambition to hold office under a new constitution, but their relation to public office is more remote than what the present members of Congress already have.

Considering these differences between Congress as a constituent assembly and a constitutional convention, I would suggest that if the intent is a radical change in the constitutional structure, such as a shift to a unicameral parliamentary form of government, the task of evaluating or formulating such a change should be entrusted to a study by a constitutional convention. Minor changes, and even important changes, but which do not involve a radical change in the structure of government, can be sought through Congress as a constituent assembly. But these latter kind of changes do not have to be done in one fell swoop. They can be attended to gradually over the years.

Concretely, what are the changes being bruited about these days? The most radical of them is the shift to a unicameral parliamentary form of government. It is being said that separation of powers and checks and balances under a presidential system have become outmoded. But the fact that the Senate has stood up to the blandishments of the executive is proof that separation of powers and checks and balances are alive. So has the fact that the Supreme Court has held its ground against the political departments.

It is also being said that separation of powers results in unwanted gridlocks. But separation of powers was never meant to be principally an instrument for efficiency; it has mainly been meant for the prevention of tyranny. That function is still being performed, to the dismay of those who want more power. As for efficiency, the principal instrument for governmental efficiency is the administrative process. Most of the serious problems we have now can be alleviated or solved by wise and well-implemented administrative process.

Is a parliamentary system really the solution? The best proof so far that it is not is the way the current House of Representatives, the principal advocate of a parliamentary system, has shamelessly behaved. We are not politically prepared for a parliamentary system that clearly exhibits authoritarian tendencies.

Is there really an urgent need to review the nationalistic economic policies of the Constitution? If there is, this is something that can be done more economically by Congress as a constituent assembly. But even now we have learned to deal with them by ordinary legislation. Moreover, there is so much that the administrative process can do for the economy even without altering the Constitution. The bigger obstacle it seems is not the Constitution but the bureaucracy. But the bureaucracy and the red tape it weaves are largely a problem for the administrative process.

Are the Cha-cha advocates saying that constitutional reform will solve the corruption problem? But corruption is preeminently an administrative problem. It is not solved by changing constitutional rules but by implementing laws in a more vigorous exercise of political will. We will not find solutions in constitutional reform if we do not have the political will to implement administrative and criminal laws—or, even just the simple traffic laws.

Should we then embark on a constitutional convention?

We must face the reality that a large segment of the population, rightly or wrongly, has been conditioned to expect constitutional reform soon. This cannot be ignored. It can, however, be dealt with through the constitutional provision which authorizes Congress to present the question to the people themselves in a plebiscite for the purpose. The Constitution says: "The Congress may ... by a majority vote, submit to the electorate the question of calling such a [constitutional] convention." This can coincide with the May 2007 elections.

Containment, not appeasement

WORLD VIEW

Ian Shapiro

AMERICA AND THE WORLD ARE WATCHING whether the Bush administration will adopt the Iraq Study Group's recommendations for an exit strategy from Iraq. That is the most pressing immediate question. But America's leaders should also think ahead—America needs a post-occupation strategy for Iraq and the Middle East, one grounded on a viable national security strategy for the 21st century. That strategy is containment.

In the run-up to the Iraq invasion, Bush rejected containment as an obsolete Cold War hangover. He pulled out the weapons inspectors and opted for preemptive war. He was portrayed as facing down a new Hitler with Churchillian resolve, and the advocates of containment were accused of appeasement. But now we know that the containment regime worked. Saddam Hussein's Iraq was in no position to threaten anyone, let alone the United States.

This was not the first time that containment—a strategy devised by George Kennan, the director of the US State Department's Policy Planning Staff under President Harry Truman, in response to the Soviet threat after World War II—has been rejected as appeasement. In the 1952 presidential election campaign, Dwight Eisenhower and his future secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, heaped scorn on containment, calling instead for a "rollback" of the Soviets in Eastern Europe.

Fortunately, once in office, Eisenhower had the sense to stick with containment in Europe, continuing a policy that is widely credited for winning the Cold War. President John F. Kennedy's insistence—against much advice—on containment during the Cuban missile crisis saved the world from nuclear war.

Containment's goal was to prevent Soviet expansion without saddling the US with unsustainable military obligations. So long as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics did not stage a military attack, containment's reliance on economic sticks and carrots, competition within the world communist movement, intelligence operations and diplomacy, and the vitality of the capitalist democracies would guarantee security. Kennan was right: the dysfunctional features of the Soviet system, and its over-extension internationally, would lead to its demise.

Where containment was abandoned, America has paid a high price. The Eisenhower administration toppled Iran's elected government in 1953, believing it to be too pro-Soviet. The hugely unpopular Shah they installed was swept away in the Islamic revolution in 1979. America made comparable errors in Guatemala and elsewhere in Latin America.

Vietnam was America's costliest departure from containment. As Kennan explained, when America goes to war over something less than a vital interest, the adversary—for whom vital interests are at stake—will fight long after the war has become too unpopular at home to sustain. Bush has repeated this mistake in Iraq.

Containment is hardly a relic of the Cold War. It worked against Libya, leading Moammar Gadhafi in the late 1990s to stop sponsoring terrorism, turn over the Lockerbie bombers for trial, and pay compensation to British and French victims of Libyan-sponsored terrorism. Containment against Libya was not appeasement. It should have been the model in Iraq, as it now should be the model in Iran. Instead, the defenders of the contemporary equivalent of "rollback" advocate attacking Iran because it is developing nuclear weapons. This makes about as much sense as it would to attack China in the 1950s.

One of Kennan's great insights was that America is well served by conflict among its adversaries. He welcomed Tito's rise in Yugoslavia as an internal challenge to Moscow's hegemony, which he hoped others would emulate.

This lesson is lost on the Bush administration. It senselessly alienated Iran in 2002 (when moderates had the upper hand there and were cooperating in Afghanistan) and reversed decades of US policy by insisting that any Middle East settlement must accept changed "realities on the ground" in the West Bank. The administration seems bent on herding adversaries together—transforming Samuel Huntington's "clash-of-civilizations" dystopia into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Kennan maintained that the US should work to create a world that no one can dominate, and that the best way to spread democracy is to demonstrate its superiority. Ramming democracy down people's throats is self-defeating. Just as it produced a potent fusion of communism and anti-American nationalism in Southeast Asia and Latin America, it is now producing a similar combination of radical Islam and anti-American nationalism across the Middle East.

Terrorist groups can be minimized if their enabling states are contained. Defenders of the Bush doctrine claim that this is impossible when they operate out of failed states that cannot police their borders. But, given that the Bush doctrine has compounded the failed-state problem, this is a bogus argument.

To build a containment regime against terrorism emanating from the Middle East, a date for America's departure from Iraq must be set. There is no other way to reverse the widespread perception across the region that the US has imperial ambitions. The other essential step is to place the resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict at the center of America's foreign policy agenda. America must push for a solution that can garner the support of significant majorities of all the peoples between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. That is the surest means of protecting and promoting democracy. ***Project Syndicate***

Ian Shapiro is professor of Political Science at Yale University and author of the forthcoming book "Containment: Rebuilding a Strategy Against Global Terror."

'Dancing lessons' from Ramon Obusan

FEATURE

John Kristoffer B. Salta

THE NEWS ABOUT NATIONAL ARTIST RAMON Obusan's death shocked me. I met and talked to him sometime ago and he made a great impact on me.

How high do we regard national artists? And has anyone ever tried to look inside the minds of these individuals? A group of friends and I happened to get a peek at the thinking of this National Artist for Dance.

To meet a class requirement, we had to interview Obusan on video. We had done our research, we were all ready with our questions and we were confident we would be able to carry a lively discussion with him. We started off by asking him about the significance between his acquired diploma and his lifetime work, about his father, and how he was raised up.

He readily answered our questions, giving us a lot of insights into the kind of life he lived—the never-heard-of places in the Philippines he had gone to in "search" of native dances; how he would go days without food; the tribes he had interacted with; the forests he walked through to get to a tribe, among others—not knowing that, in fact, he found them boring. Then, all of a sudden, he ordered us to stop the tape and blurted out: "Are you all really UP students? Your questions can all be found in the library of your school and especially in the records section of the CCP. Why did you waste your time and mine to ask these stupid questions? Have you really prepared for this? Is this the education that UP is teaching nowadays?"

He went on to tell us that he wanted a livelier and interesting conversation. We were embarrassed, of course. This was a well-respected artist rebuking us, after all; and we couldn't say a word in response. Finally, after what seemed to be an eternity of silence, I heard myself asking him: "To be honest Mr. Obusan, I find what you're doing to be quite boring. It's not something I would waste my time on. But why do you continue to bring these native tribal dances to the urban stage? What fuels you?"

After getting a compliment for my "good question," he started to talk about the secret of having a "passion" for one's work or calling. He said that it's the one driving force that could get you anywhere you want to go. Having the passion—the heart—to do a particular job will turn work into a hobby, something you will want to do all the time.

Obusan was a lover of people and that's one reason he took up Anthropology in UP during his college days. He loved freedom of expression. He loved noting the simple gestures of people when they talk to each other, why they subconsciously look up when thinking, scratch their chin when listening, or tap their fingers when impatient. The art in expressing and in the expression itself fired up his heart, and "dance," according to him, was one of the arts that best expressed people's inner feelings.

He taught us about three very important lessons that we could learn from the art of dancing: "Discipline, discipline and discipline!"

He said that "Dance is even more disciplined than military training. Your steps are counted in the military, everything is in rhythm or cadence, and each time your commander wants you to make a turn or execute a maneuver, a command is issued beforehand. In a dance, however, everything is memorized and practiced before a show."

He explained to us the strict discipline in changing from costume to costume in less than a minute, the cues required for the performer to know, and the strict focus a dancer needs to have to perform well.

Obusan was, yes, an artist, but what use is an artist who does not have "passion" for his countrymen? The history of the Philippines can tell you that Filipinos have long expressed the glory and love of country through various art forms. While science and math conquer worlds and the future, the arts reveal the hearts and souls of people.

Obusan did not ask for the National Artist Award. He was just a simple artist who loved the Filipino nation. He didn't think of making a difference, he did it, and I guess he had one of the most beautiful minds.

News of his death was "texted" to me at 7 in the evening of Dec. 21 by Keilie, one of my groupmates. She said the famed artist was on national news, he was dead. It took a while before the thought sank in. I guess I just couldn't believe how easily a lifetime of work, dedication and love ended so suddenly.

The good thing is that it has not ended, after all; it has only begun. Many native tribes will continue to have their dances recognized, thanks to Obusan and the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG).

Like me, many people may not be able to understand the dances, the tribes and the person himself; but they can surely relate to the passion that Obusan shared with his nation.

John Kristoffer B. Salta is a tourism student at the University of the Philippines, Diliman.

School feeding

COMMENTARY

Juan Miguel Luz

"BE CAREFUL OF WHAT YOU DREAM, YOU MIGHT GET what you wish for."

In 2004, the Department of Education prepared a 10-year budget simulation to lay the foundation for a more rational multi-year budgeting for the public school system. That study concluded that the national government should spend 8 to 9 percent more each year for education—not 1 to 2 percent—to address growing shortages and to improve the overall education performance in the system. That 8 to 9 percent translates into an additional P9 billion to P10 billion per year.

In 2006, the DepEd proposed a P119.5 billion budget—an increase of P7.5 billion, including P1.5 billion for school feeding. That budget was not passed into law. Instead the DepEd had to live with its reenacted P112 billion budget of 2005.

To make up for lost ground, the DepEd has been given a budget of P134 billion for 2007—an increase of P22 billion over the 2006 allocation. The DepEd should be happy; it is getting what it dreamed of.

Well, yes and no. Yes, because on paper, education spending will go up appreciably. No, because it opens up areas of tremendous waste for the national government. School feeding is a case in point.

The 2007 DepEd budget includes a proposed P4.01 billion "school feeding" line item. But this form of "school feeding" is actually a rice distribution project. The label obscures the project's real intent.

First, some facts about the need for school feeding:

30 percent of all pupils aged 6-12 years (Grades 1-6) are underweight or "underheight" (a form of under- or malnutrition).

For every 100 Grade 1 pupils, only 65 will likely finish Grade 6. The 35 that do not finish drop out for many reasons, the most prominent of which being poor health and nutrition.

There is a strong correlation between poor nutrition and the dropout incidence, and school feeding is the correct intervention to try to keep kids in school—particularly the 6- to 8-year-old Grades 1-3 pupils where the dropout rate is highest.

In 2004, the Social Weather Stations reported higher incidences of hunger in the country. The administration responded by converting the DepEd school feeding program into a rice distribution project, "pilot-tested" in certain divisions in Metro Manila, Cavite and Rizal.

Pupils in Grades 1 and 2 in participating schools received a kilo of rice each day for family consumption. Tried over a four-month period (December 2004 to March 2005) at a cost of P200 million, the project was proclaimed an overwhelming success despite the misgivings of the DepEd. Those misgivings were told in a DepEd report to then Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman.

What misgivings? The DepEd report spoke of the following:

First, rice was provided by the National Food Authority through a negotiated contract. In the first month, the rice was first-class Fortified Vitamin A. In the succeeding months, the quality of rice deteriorated significantly. By the project's end, the rice was yellowish and smelly.

Second, the NFA initially delivered rice on a weekly basis, pre-packed in one-kilo bags ready for distribution. By the second month, however, the NFA was dropping off rice at schools on a monthly basis in sacks, not pre-packed.

Classroom space had to be used to store the sacks of rice, and this aggravated the classroom shortage problem. Then, the stored rice brought with it a problem of pests.

Furthermore, instead of concentrating on classroom teaching or preparation, the teachers spent their time repacking rice.

Other issues cropped up: When a child is absent, could parents come and claim the rice? Could principals refuse to give out that rice to parents? When there is unclaimed rice, can teachers take it for themselves? The answers may be obvious, but in a political project like this, does it matter?

Having judged the pilot project a success despite the DepEd's misgivings, the administration ramped it up into a nationwide program. Thus in 2007, every public elementary school became a rice distribution point. But rice distribution is clearly neither the mandate nor the mission of the public education system.

Direct school feeding targets the most undernourished children precisely to make sure they are fed and nurtured to meet the rigors of formal schooling. Rice distribution is no such guarantee. When that much rice flows, one can almost imagine a secondary market where a good part of that rice will be resold to pay for the other food items needed by the family. (The DepEd—in certain districts—reported this.) When all members of the family share the rice, will the very young children get their fair share?

The 2007 DepEd budget will rise significantly because the DepEd did its job convincing policymakers that we aren't spending enough on education. But what we are seeing now is that the increase, or a sizeable chunk of its budget, is going to be used not for education purposes.

That is why, to ensure that the amount goes into the school system, the Senate is moving to realign it for classroom construction. What happens then to the school feeding program?

The DepEd formula was always much simpler: Every public elementary school should have its parents association grow the school gardens to supplement the school-feeding commodities of milk, noodles, rice and/or nutribuns. This way, no more than P1.5 billion (the original amount proposed by the DepEd) would be required for some 37,000 public elementary schools.

Forget rice distribution through schools. It is prone to corruption and it will take teachers away from teaching. In a system that needs to stay focused on delivering quality education, let's spare the teachers the politics that goes with rice distribution. And let's work with smaller budgets if it means doing away with waste.

What about the hunger situation? That is a reflection of poverty and the answer is economic opportunity, jobs or work, not welfare; certainly not rice distribution through schools.

Juan Miguel Luz is president of the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction and was an education undersecretary for finance and administration from October 2002 to April 2006.

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Let's follow Brazil's example

YOUR NEWS REPORT ON THE expected "softening of fuel prices" next year (PDI, 12/25/06) was heartening. But the the Biofuel Act mandates only a 1-percent biofuel mix in diesel engines and 5 percent in gas engines.

Why limit the use of biofuel? Fossil fuel—more specifically the carbon dioxide emitted from its use—aside from poisoning the world's environment and causing the thinning of the world's ionosphere, also causes many ailments.

Why can't we follow the example of Brazil? That South American country simply refused to be cowed when oil prices soared in 1970. In response, Brazil used its sugar lands and industry to produce ethanol and since then, it has become the world's No. 1 ethanol producer.

The Philippines has thousands upon thousands of arable land lying idle which could otherwise be put to good use by planting biofuel-producing plants. Our jobless millions can be trained by the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Science and Technology to plant and produce biofuels, which are so badly needed not only by the Philippines but also by non-oil-producing countries.

Let's stop using dirty fuel as soon as we can, and let's make a quick shift to clean fuel like ethanol and biodiesel. If the government will really help in this undertaking, we can free ourselves from the shackles of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and the oppressive dirty fuel. And we will surely see a more progressive Philippines.

—FERNANDO SAZON,
51 & 52 Permaline Homes,
East Drive, Fortune, Marikina City

Wage increase equals higher unemployment rate

THE GOVERNMENT WILL FAIL at job creation if it allows the minimum wage to go up by P125. At such wage level, businesses will hire less people.

The problem with a high minimum wage is that the marginally productive component of the labor force becomes more expensive. The only ones who will benefit from this wage increase will be the slow workers.

Business has always paid productive workers well. This wage increase will only succeed in increasing the unemployment rate and further encourage our workers to go overseas.

—GUS COSIO,
11 New Jersey St.,
Quezon City 1112

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER LETTERS

Idolized uncle turned bully

THIS IS UNFORTUNATE. JUAN de la Cruz has always been loyal to Uncle Sam, fighting side by side with the uncle in almost every war the latter had been in—whether as defender or bully. Now Uncle Sam turns around and begins bullying Juan as well. And for what?

For one of his soldiers who has been found guilty of raping a daughter of Juan. It's like Uncle Sam is telling Juan: "We don't really care about you and your family, much less about how you might feel about this. To hell with your laws, your usefulness has come to an end."

I still don't want to believe that the uncle I once idolized is, after all, a monster. But here he is, starting wars on all fronts and intimidating even his most loyal dog.

I say, send US Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith to Muntinlupa where criminals belong.

—JOSE BATALLER,
j_bataler@hotmil.com

Who could be the better change agent?

I'M REACTING TO THE COLUMN of Recah Trinidad where he raised the question as to who, between President Macapagal-Arroyo and Manny "Pacman" Pacquiao, would make for a more effective change agent for our country. (PDI, 12/20/06)

Personally, I believe neither one of them will do. And before I repeat that tired, old cliché about how change should start within each one of us (oh, I just did that!), let me just say this: We, Filipinos, are being too harsh on ourselves by suggesting that we need a massive character overhaul to get ourselves out of the dismal rut our country is in.

Isn't this, after all, what we are telling ourselves as a nation: The reason for corruption, for poverty, for political instability is the ugliness found in our character. If we accept that our ugly character is the root of all evil in this country, then there is no hope for us all. Ms Arroyo and Pacman combined can't do much about it.

But there is hope. The reality is that even ugly people succeed in life. I have seen this happen and continue to happen. All I can say is, they're now beautiful people because they're now successful. Building a great society has nothing to do with having an ugly or beautiful character. All peoples have the capability to build great societies. But you cannot build a great society if you have a lingering doubt about your character. And that's exactly what this call for "national values transformation" suggests. And it creates more self-doubt.

If we are to build a great society, we must begin to accept who we are—damaged or not, ugly or beautiful. That is the first step. And who knows what the second step is? In the journey of nation-building, every step is a step to the unknown, requiring tremendous amount of self-belief.

Ms Arroyo should not create self-doubt in the Filipino psyche by calling for "values transformation." It's like Charter change. It sounds good but, at the end of the day, it's not a real solution to our country's problems. Ms Arroyo should just focus on good governance. As for Pacman, he should stick to boxing. He should not consider a career in politics, ever. It's not his cup of tea.

As for the rest of us, well, let's just have a Happy New Year! Forget whining. Keep smiling. And if anyone spoils our holiday by telling us about values transformation, just tell him: "Shut up. Work hard. Feed your own family."

—SAM DIGNADICE,
Sam_Dignadice@yahoo.com

Jose Rizal's imprints on the Philippine Revolution

IN HIS DEC. 25 COLUMN, MANUEL L. Quezon III counters his review of Harold Augenbraun's excellent English translation of Jose Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere" with a plug for a tendentious biography of Rizal by Javier de Pedro. A member of the Opus Dei, De Pedro can only see "Rizal Through a Glass Darkly." The Catholic Church in the Philippines had, after all, banned "Noli Me Tangere" and burned copies of it for being anti-friar and anti-government.

Quezon noted that even as De Pedro sees Rizal as a "patriot," the priest doesn't see him as a "nationalist." De Pedro is utterly wrong in asserting that in the "Noli," Rizal did not treat our country as a "nation" under colonial bondage. In the novel, the boatman Elias, after complaining of the common brutalities and cruelties of the friars and the Spanish government, appealed to Ibarra, the "Noli's" protagonist, to "Take up the people's cause, unite the people, don't ignore their voices, be an example to the rest, give them the concept of what one calls a nation!"

In that part of the novel, Ibarra still expressed his loyalty to Spain. But in "El Filibusterismo," the sequel to the "Noli," Ibarra metamorphosed into Simoun, the terrorist and revolutionary. Through Basilio, another victim of clerico-fascism, Simoun plots to bomb a gathering of Spanish officials, priests and Chinese businessmen, and trigger an uprising against the colonial rule.

Contemporaries of Rizal, like Andres Bonifacio, a member of Rizal's revolutionary La Liga Filipina, correctly interpreted Rizal's "Noli" and "Fili," together with his other writings, as a call for revolution, and so they formed the Katipunan. The Katipuneros used Rizal's name as a rallying cry for the nationalist revolution.

In his definitive biography of Rizal, titled "Rizal: Filipino Nationalist and Patriot," another Englishman, Austin Coates, wrote: "The awakening of Asia to the concept of nationalism, and to the demand for independence from the colonial powers—the Asian independence movement—began in the Philippine Islands with the publication of Rizal's 'Noli Me Tangere' in 1887. From that date till 1901, the Philippines provided the main scene of this movement, the continental nature of which was not yet apparent."

One hundred ten years after his execution by the Spanish government, Rizal remains controversial, despite the common *tao's* undeniable veneration of him, because of the Catholic Church's and the ruling class' ceaseless efforts to misinterpret, distort and obfuscate his teachings and actions. The Rizal Law, enacted through the efforts of nationalists Claro M. Recto and Jose P. Laurel, is now practically a dead law, as Rizal courses on his unexpurgated writings have been suppressed in both public and private (sectarian) schools. The colonial mentality, as shown by our government's position on the Smith rape case, persists.

—MANUEL F. ALMARIO,
spokesman, Movement for Truth In History (MOTH),
mfalmario@yahoo. com

The national hero would have been proud of him

I COULD NOT HELP BUT FEEL SADness and elation after reading Jose Miguel Arguelles' "Dreading Christmas" (PDI, 12/21/06): sadness at his father's tragic failure to understand his son's suffering and aspirations; elation at knowing that a young Filipino could be so principled to risk parental, and even social, disapproval.

I, too, lived overseas for over 30 years, and there I found out there is no place like home. I hope that in this country, time will come when social justice will heal our troubled society's physical and spiritual hunger. I hope that parents will stop viewing their children as a commercial enterprise and allow them the freedom to be themselves and to be happy and fulfilled in their own right.

Would that there were more young people like Arguelles. His heart is in the right place.

—A. FERNANDEZ,
binhi12644@yahoo.com

Meralco's poor coordination system

I AM WRITING TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE poor service of Meralco, a public utility firm.

Our electric meter was stolen last Dec. 14 at 3 a.m. We reported the matter to the Meralco Caloocan branch, with the proper supporting documents from the police, barangay office, etc., in the morning of Dec. 15. Because it was a Friday, we didn't really expect Meralco to attend to the matter until the following Monday.

On Monday, Dec. 18, a team of Meralco representatives came but did not install a new meter. The reason? There was a power outage in Camanava. Of course, we took the explanation to mean that Meralco would install the new meter the next day. But on Dec. 19, no one from Meralco came—this despite three calls to the Meralco call center.

On Dec. 20, I called Meralco again, this time, directly, at its Caloocan branch. I was advised that it was the Balintawak metering office that installs new meters; the Caloocan branch only refers that kind of problem to the Balintawak office. But apparently because the Balintawak office could not be contacted, I was told by the Caloocan branch that it would follow-up my report. In good faith, we thought that the new meter would be installed that day. Lunch came but still there was no Meralco meter. I called Meralco's call center twice more, but in vain.

On Dec. 21, my calls got the usual response—our new meter had been scheduled for installation. I have a 6-month-old baby in our house. We have to use candles at night.

Why is Meralco so insensitive and inefficient?

The call center tells us that the Caloocan branch will attend to us and that branch in turn tells us that it is the Balintawak office's responsibility to provide us with a meter. But I have no way of contacting the Balintawak office. And all this is simply for the installation of an electric meter.

I wonder what or how long it would take Meralco if the problem involved a transformer or a more serious one. What good is a call center if it cannot help Meralco to attend, within a reasonable time, a consumer's needs? What system of coordination does Meralco have? What good is a TV commercial about Meralco if actual service is inefficient?

—DENNIS MACALISANG,
dennis_macalisang@yahoo.com

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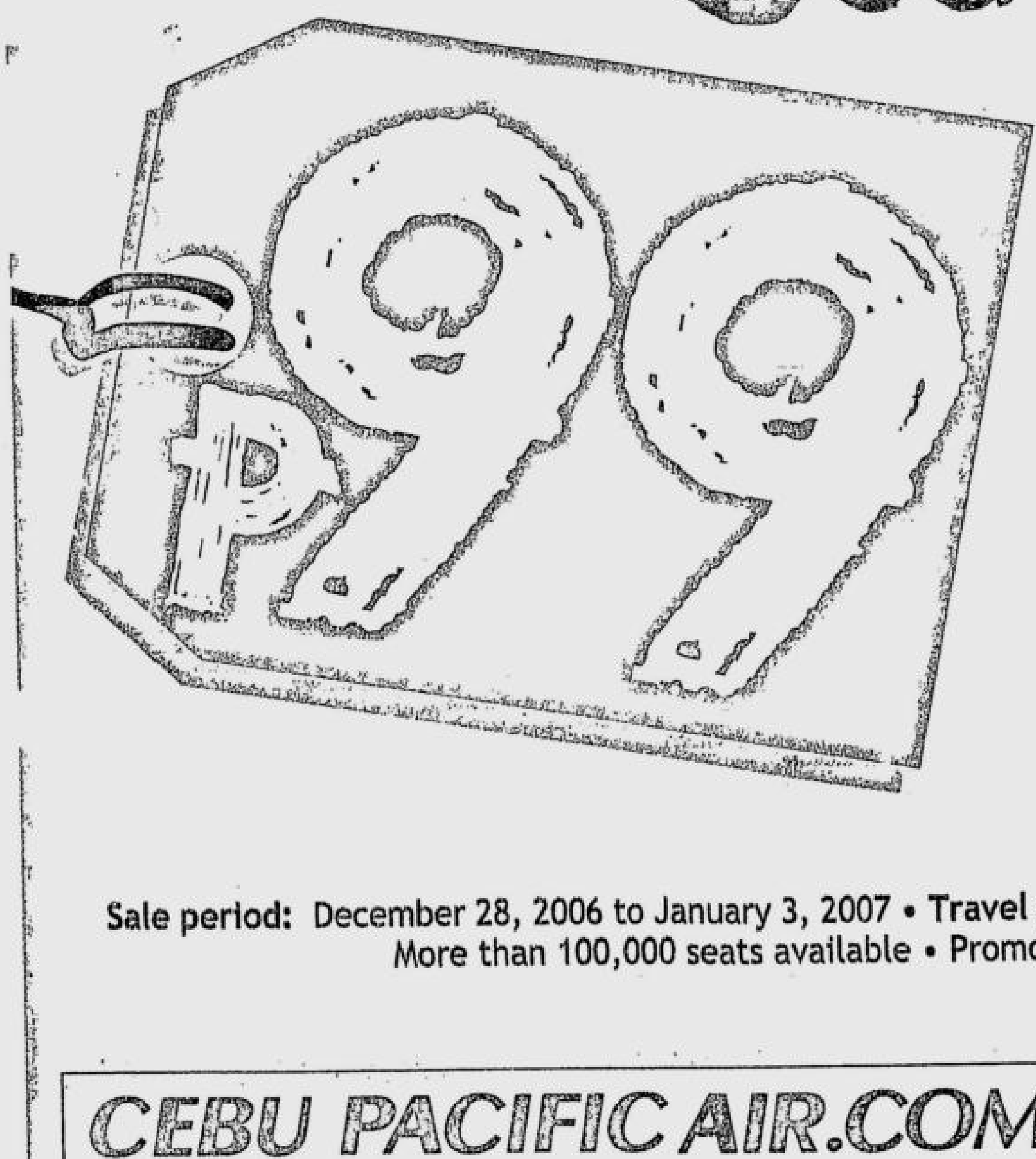

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30 Chinese poachers to face charges

By Norman Bordadora

THIRTY CHINESE FISHERMEN WERE SCHEDuled to arrive in Puerto Princesa the other night to face charges of violating the country's fisheries and environmental laws.

The suspects were arrested in the Tubbataha marine sanctuary on Dec. 21 with some 1,200 pieces of live fish, including the endangered Napoleon wrasse or "mameng."

Lawyer Evangeline Songco of the Tubbataha Management Office said the Chinese poachers were fetched by a Philippine Navy vessel after more than a week of being held by rangers in Tubbataha.

"Not all the fish were released because of the bad weather. There were huge waves according to one of the rangers I talked to," Songco said in a telephone interview.

Songco said the remaining fish would be released by 7 a.m. yesterday after being photographed and inventoried for evidence gathering purposes.

Alarm raised

The World Wide Fund for Nature in the Philippines raised an alarm over the alleged proliferation of Chinese poachers in Philippine seas to catch endangered fish.

Lorenzo Tan, president of WWF-Philippines, said Philippine Coast Guard records showed that aside from the vessel Hoi Wan that was accosted by Tubbataha reef rangers the week before Christmas, there was another Chinese ship that might contain endangered fish species but was able to evade authorities.

"Where is the FV Tai Sha today? Does its cargo include Napoleon wrasse—the world's largest coral reef fish species? The New Year is a high season for lavish banquets that include this prized fish," Tan told the INQUIRER.

$100 a kilogram

"If it remains at sea, Tai Sha is clearly making a beeline for China and a financial reward. Napoleon wrasse reportedly sells for more than $100 a kilogram at Hong Kong restaurants," he added.

Tan said the Hoi Wan and the Tai Sha were monitored because these were issued permits by Philippine authorities.

Hoi Wan, however, was found to have fishing equipment that may have been used to catch "mameng" in the country.

Without permits

He expressed alarm over Chinese fishing vessels that were not credited to operate in the country.

"How many more Chinese fishing vessels are operating in Philippine waters today without proper permits? How many of them continue to buy or catch fish illegally and destructively, snatching both food and future away from our own children?" Tan said.

Leaders and environment stakeholders of Palawan on Friday sent their own version of a diplomatic note to the Chinese Embassy in Manila, challenging it to allow Philippine laws to be applied to the 30 suspected poachers on board Hoi Wan.

Governor and bishop

Palawan Gov. Joel Reyes and Bishop Pedro Arigo led the leaders and environment stakeholders who asked the Chinese Embassy to refrain from using diplomatic channels to pressure the Philippines into releasing the fishermen.

"We appeal to the (Chinese) government to do its utmost in ensuring compliance with its international obligations in the conservation of the marine environment, particularly by adopting corrective policy measures on its own fisheries sector that affect Palawan in particular and the Philippines in general," the note read.

The Palawan leaders asked the Chinese government "to share our view that the proper management of our fishery resources has beneficial impact not only on the people of Palawan but also on the Chinese people."

"Finally, we challenge the Chinese government to let justice take its course in the case of the FV Hoi Wan by refraining from undertaking efforts that could be construed as exerting diplomatic pressures that will compromise the due process of law," the Palawan officials and stakeholders said.

Father, daughter team taking shape in Davao City polls

DAVAO CITY—MAYOR RODRIGO Duterte said he wants his daughter Sara as running mate in next year's mayoral elections.

During the Christmas party of the city's village chiefs held at the Grand Menseng Hotel here on Dec. 26, Duterte said Sara would make a good vice mayor.

But he admitted that he was not sure about the public's response to a father and daughter tandem.

Duterte earlier said he will not allow any member of his family to be involved in "the messy and difficult world of politics."

But he said he changed his mind because he realized that his efforts for the city could go to waste if corrupt politicians would take over city hall.

Duterte said his father—who governed the then undivided Davao province—has left him a leadership that he "could not just bequeath to anybody else, especially to some politicians who have tainted the image of the city."

"I have been running this city alone for the past many years and whether I like it or not, I will retire. My father has left me a leadership and this I performed with the utmost desire to bring the people of Davao only the best," Duterte said.

He said passing that leadership should be made with utmost concern.

"I have to be very careful. I am wary that my efforts for Davao would go to waste but if my daughter will become the next vice mayor, I can always be her guide," Duterte said.

Duterte said he detests the idea of working with politicians involved in corruption scandals.

He even named former Mayor Benjamin de Guzman—a former ally—as among politicians he would never work with again. De Guzman has announced his intention to run in the vice mayoralty race.

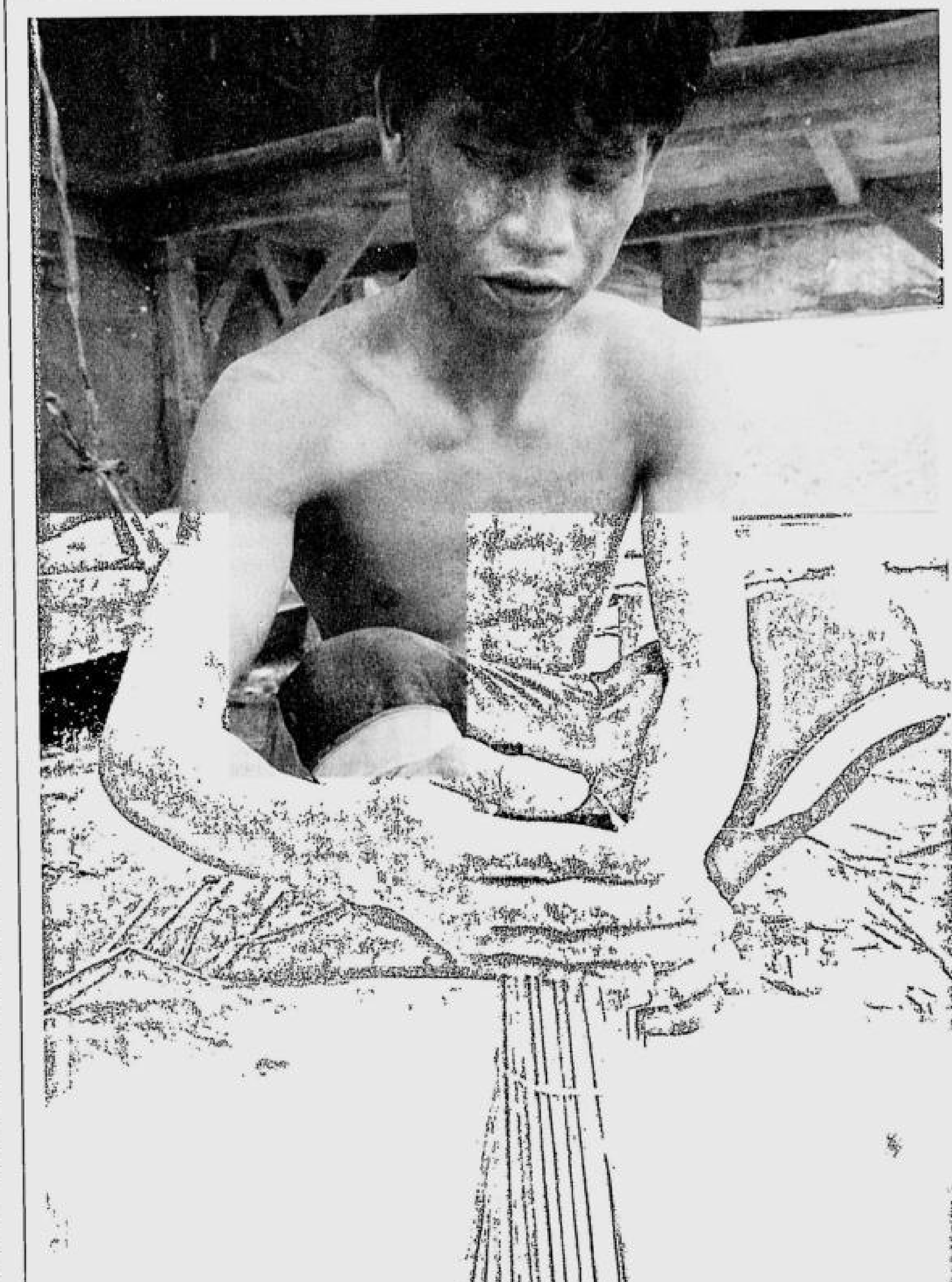
"There will certainly be chaos in our governance should he (De Guzman) become the next vice mayor. I would rather resign as mayor and surrender my post to him. He has done practically nothing to Davao when he was the mayor... look at Artica? It is a huge questionable project under his leadership," Duterte said referring to the mothballed multi-million sports center built under De Guzman's administration.

Sara, a lawyer, has refused to comment on his father's announcement.

But Duterte appears to be serious in tapping his daughter as running mate that he even commissioned a survey on Sara's acceptability to the public.

Councilor Peter Laviña, who conducted a separate quick survey on Dec. 27, said 35 percent of the 175 respondents asked wanted Sara to be the next vice mayor.

"The issue of readiness here is debatable and relative but given that her family is an old political clan and that she has been exposed to politics all her life, Sara has an advantage over the other hopefuls aside from the fact that she is also a lawyer," Laviña said. *Jeffrey M. Tupas and Rizalene Acac, Inquirer Mindanao*



RISK TAKER
The backyard industry of firecracker manufacturing in many parts of Bulacan has drawn workers such as this man covered with gunpowder as he fills cardboard cylinders with gunpowder in Bocaue town. AFFY LERM

GMA OKs ₱150M for repair of highway in Cordillera

BONTOC, MT. PROVINCE—PRESident Macapagal-Arroyo has allotted another P150 million for the improvement of Halsema Highway, the main highway connecting vegetable producing towns and tourist spots in the Cordillera.

The funds promised by the President in her visit here Thursday would add to the P100 million earlier set aside to complete the rehabilitation of the highway's section in this province and came after the World Bank stopped additional loans for the project.

Gov. Maximo Dalog said Ms Arroyo told officials of the province and the Department of Public Works and Highways to prioritize the concreting of the highway's section from Mt. Data in Bauko town to the capital town of Bontoc.

That section's improvement is the second phase of the Halsema Highway rehabilitation project.

The first phase covered the completion of the highway's section from Baguio to Buguias, Benguet, which cost P1.2 billion, while the third phase would cover the Bontoc to Banaue (Ifugao) section of the highway.

"The President emphasized the concreting of the highway as her real priority. During the briefing, I [stressed] that the concreting of the road was very important," Dalog told the INQUIRER.

He said the World Bank loan cancellation was announced in November during a meeting between Mariano Alquiza, DPWH Cordillera director, and Thomas Killip, presidential assistant for Cordillera affairs.

Dalog said the DPWH officials did not cite the reason for the loan's cancellation.

William Balajo, chief of the construction division of the DPWH-Cordillera, said the funding withdrawal meant that local funds would be used to rehabilitate the highway.

Dalog said the World Bank earlier released P700 million for the road project and the funds authorized by Ms Arroyo to be released next year would help hasten the project's completion.

Dalog and Mt. Province Rep. Victor Dominguez differed on how the P100 million earlier set aside for the project would be used.

Dominguez said the amount should be used for the widening of sections of the highway and for the installation of guardrail, which he said followed the DPWH's original program of work.

The President spent her holidays in Baguio City at The Mansion, the official residence of the President in the summer capital.

From there, the President went on business as usual although took some time off touring various sites in the city and neighboring areas.

Officials, however, were silent on an explosion that rocked a store near the La Trinidad vegetable trading post that Ms Arroyo was scheduled to visit on Dec. 28.

The blast occurred at 9:30 a.m. at the Grace's store, damaging goods and glass panes in the area. No one was reported hurt. *Desiree Caluza with a report from Frank Cimatu, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Lucena firecracker vendors herded in cemetery

FIRECRACKER makers in Bocaue, Bulacan, celebrate the coming of the New Year and an increase in sales. RAFFY LERMA

LUCENA CITY—TO AVOID THE repeat of the deadly fire that occurred a day before the New Year's celebration two years ago, the local government here herded all vendors of firecrackers and pyrotechnics inside the vast compound of the still unused public cemetery located in the outskirts of the city.

Senior Supt. Reuben Theodore Sindac, Lucena police chief, said he had ordered the local police force to strictly implement the local ordinance designating the public cemetery as the common selling area of legal New Year's explosives.

"We have to be strict to protect the welfare of the whole city. We can't afford to be complacent when what are at stakes are people's lives and properties," Sindac said.

Past noon of Dec. 31, 2004, a vendor lit up a firecracker to test his merchandise but instead of shooting up, the rocket made a horizontal turn and landed on a pile of pyrotechnics inside a store near the public market.

The rocket set off a massive explosion and caused a fire that burned nine other establishments.

At least 15 persons were killed in the blaze and millions of pesos worth of property were destroyed.

After the fire, the local government passed an ordinance designating the still vacant cemetery in the secluded corner of Barangay Market View as the common area for all local hawkers of New Year's firecrackers and pyrotechnics, which were formerly openly selling their dangerous products in the vicinity of the public market in the central part of the city.

Sindac said the local police would also implement the ban on the use of "boga," an improvised cannon fashioned out of a PVC (polyvinyl chloride) pipe.

"It's a national order from Camp Crame," he said.

PNP chief Director General Oscar C. Calderon also announced the order in a message at Camp Gen. Simeon Ola during the turnover of the Bicol regional command from Chief Supt. Victor B. Boco to Chief Supt. Ricardo I. Padilla on Thursday.

Calderon also appealed to local executives to issue similar orders to ban "boga" in their areas of jurisdiction.

According to Health Secretary Francisco Duque III, the use of "boga" and picolo, another type of firecracker, made up almost 50 percent of the cause of the 173 firecracker-related accidents last year.

John Almario, the lone maker of PVC-made cannons here, said the product was safer compared to common firecrackers like "bawang," "triangulo," and many other similar explosives.

"I've already sold plenty of my products but no one has returned to complain that he was hurt or injured. I took extra efforts to fulfill all the safety requirements to make it safe for the users. But if the user is careless, that's another matter," he said.

However, he said, he would abide by the police order.

"Anyway, I've already recouped my small investment and already made a little profit," Almario said. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon*

2006

From across the seas, relief and remittances coax better-than-expected 5.5% growth

From page A7

OVERSEAS REMITTANCES KEEP THE ECONOMY AFLOAT

Over $12 billion in overseas dollar remittances (and possibly 30 percent more coming in through unofficial channels) helped strengthen the peso, allowed government to retire some of its foreign debts and pushed economic growth from 5.1 percent in 2005 to 5.5 percent last year. A robust stock market, increased electronics exports, slightly improved agriculture and additional investments in mining also offset the generally dismal performance of trade, industry and tourism.

Despite wars, over a million left for abroad. Authorities reported 7.3 percent unemployment, down from over 10 percent three years ago. But a record high of over a million Filipinos passed through the Ninoy Aquino International Airport to more lucrative jobs abroad.

AFP

JESS YUSON

EDWIN BACASMAS

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

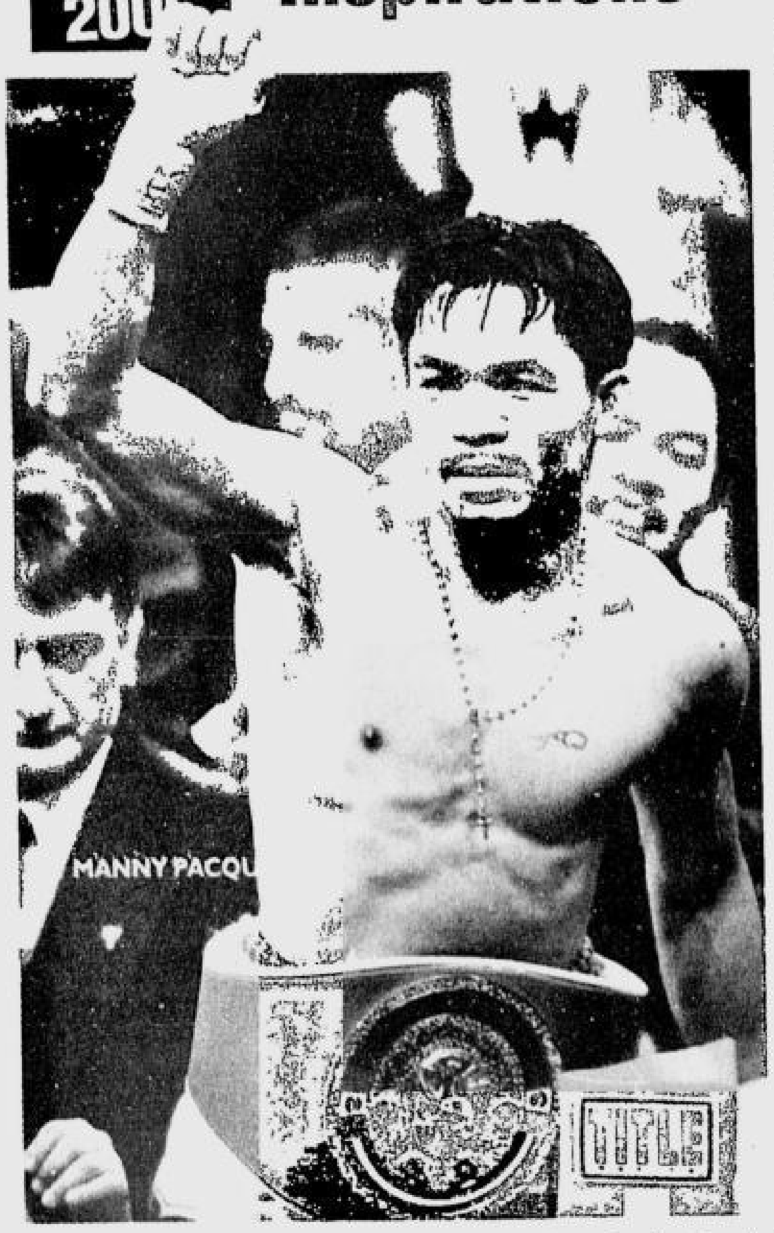
Somehow, Pinoys cope. As gasoline prices soared in the first half of the year, scooter sales rose 20 percent. Divisoria's 168 mall, stuffed with cheap imports from China, has become a popular shopping area.

TXT-ALL-U-CAN

Police waged off and on battles with cell phone thieves, but price busting text promos maintained Manila's lead as the "texting capital of the world." National Telecommunications Commission estimates 250 million text messages are sent daily from over 35 million cellutar phone subscribers.

2006

Inspirations

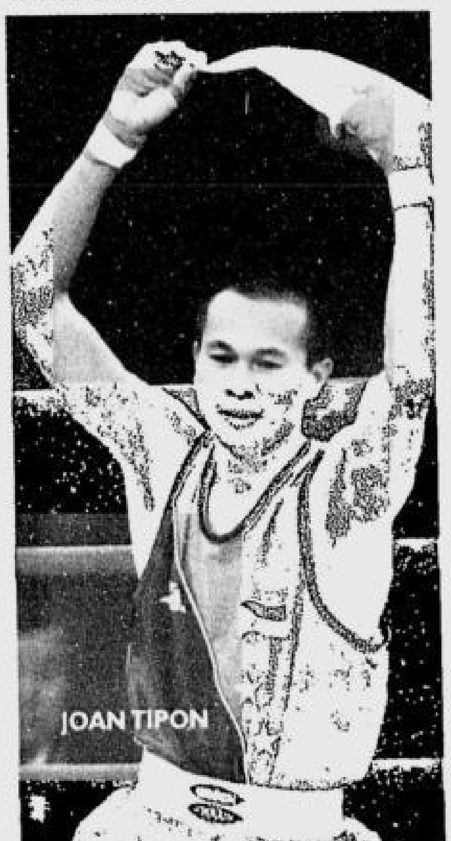

MANNY PACQU

RONATO ALCANO

ROMY GARDUCE

JEFFREY DE LUNA

ANTONIO CABICA


JOAN TIPON

The victories of boxer Manny Pacquiao, billiards underdog Ronnie Alcano and bowler Biboy Rivera provided hope and cheers for the nation's sagging spirits. At the Asian Games in Doha, the team managed to win four golds, its best performance in over three decades. Three competing Filipino mountaineers also planted the Philippine flag on the summit of Mt. Everest.

2006

War, terrorism continue to spread tension worldwide

QUAGMIRE IN IRAQ

Saddam Hussein was executed but US officials more openly conceded that they could not win militarily in Iraq. Almost all cities in the world faced Islamist terror threats, including Cebu, where authorities canceled a 10-leader summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in December. From reclusive North Korea, a nuclear test explosion increased tension.

SADDAM HUSSEIN

GEORGE W. BUSH

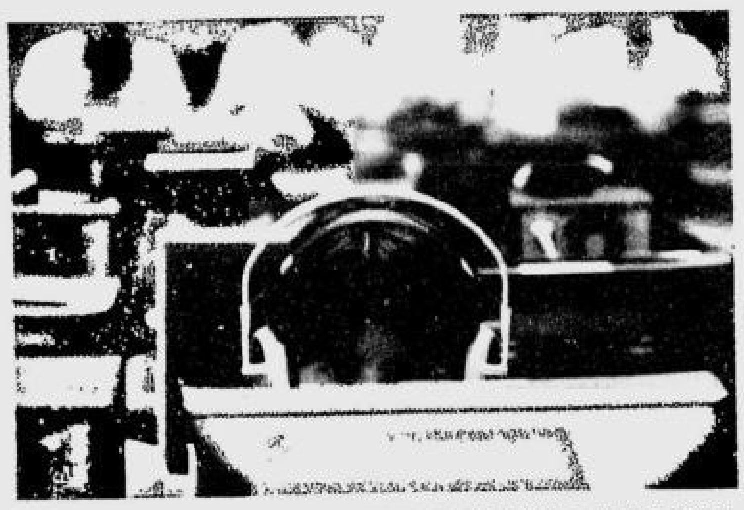
KIM JONG-IL

2006

China roars: New prosperity in the region

ASCENDANT

Despite growing world uncertainty, China and India continued to roar with spectacular double-digit growth, promising new prosperity in the region. Vietnam, which successfully hosted the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (Apec) last year, stepped out with 8 percent growth.



CYBERPOPULATION TOPS 1 BILLION

The worldwide number of Internet users surpassed 1 billion at the start of the year—up from only 45M in 1995 and 420M in 2000. Much of current and future Internet user growth is now coming from developing countries such as China, India, Brazil, Russia and Indonesia. According to the Computer Industry Almanac 7.8 million Filipinos are members of the borderless world wide web.

Red Cross pledges 9,000 homes for victims of 'Reming'

RELIEF GOODS
RED CROSS

RAFFY LERMA

HOLIDAY SEASON
Marilyn Mujar and son Jon Carlo, 8 months old, ponder their future after receiving bags of relief goods at the Pili Sports Center from the Philippine National Red Cross, along with 1,700 families displaced by Supertyphoon "Reming" in Camarines Sur.

PILI, CAMARINES SUR—THE International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) pledged to provide 9,000 new homes to the victims of Supertyphoon "Reming" in the provinces of Albay and Camarines Sur, a representative said here Friday.

Allan Piggs, representative of the IFRC, said in a press conference here that 7,000 housing units in this province and 2,000 housing units in Albay will be provided.

Without citing figures of the cost of each housing unit, Piggs said that galvanized iron sheets, wood, nails and other construction materials will be delivered to families who lost their homes.

Piggs said the destruction wrought by Reming in Camarines Sur was more extensive in Camarines Sur than in Albay but that there were more deaths recorded in Albay.

Gov. Luis Raymund Villafuerte, who has been coordinating with the Philippine National Red Cross when the supertyphoon struck, said that the IFRC's pledge would cover some 10 percent of the number of families who lost their homes here.

Villafuerte said Reming destroyed more than 77,022 homes all over the province, 55 percent of school buildings estimated at P1.6 billion and several public health clinics.

The governor said the provincial government has been continuously appealing to local and international humanitarian organizations to help in the rehabilitation of the province.

"Almost a month after the destruction, there is still so much that needed response. I am more concerned that more people may be dying," Villafuerte lamented.

He said he is very grateful that the IFRC has responded to the call of the provincial government after its representative saw the extent of destruction in this province.

Piggs also pledged to help rebuild several health clinics destroyed by Reming in Camarines Sur.

On Friday, the PNRC distributed relief goods donated by the Philip Morris Co., United States and other donors to 7,500 families, enough to sustain them for two weeks. *Juan Escandor Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Palparan formula seen in new anti-Red plan

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Oplan Bantay Laya II, the government's new internal security master plan aimed at defeating communist insurgency by 2010, has adopted the "urban militarization" strategy of a former Army general accused of killing political activists, according to Anakpawis party-list Rep. Rafael Mariano.

The institutionalization of the strategy employed by retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan would make the campaign "more brutal, fascist and merciless," said Mariano, a member of the House committees on national defense and human rights, in a statement here.

The plan also retained Palparan's supposed use of "death squads," he said but without stating how these concepts were cited in the new plan. He demanded an all-out inquiry on the new plan.

Palparan, who concluded his career in September this year as commander of the Army's 7th Infantry Division, denied masterminding some 500 incidents of extra-judicial killings, disappearances and other forms of human rights violations during his stints in Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog and Visayas regions since 1989. He has not been charged in courts.

Mariano said it was in Central Luzon where Palparan "experimented with bringing counter-insurgency to the urban centers, militarizing in the process San Fernando and Angeles cities in Pampanga, San Jose City in Nueva Ecija, Tarlac City, and Malolos City in Bulacan."

In interviews with the INQUIRER, the general then confirmed also fielding special operations teams (SOTs) to urban and rural centers to eliminate the logistical, financial and mass bases of the communist rebels mainly those from the New People's Army.

"You go where the enemy is," he said to explain for his expansion of the theater of war in the region where communist movements in the 1930s and 1970s took roots.

In deploying SOTs, mainly a squad of soldiers, to the lowlands, he said he modified the SOT concept originally confined since 1986 in "Red areas" or guerrilla bases.

His troops safeguarded the so-called liberated areas by establishing the barangay defense systems there.

By the time he retired, he said the military has not officially adopted his brand of SOT, which he claimed to have been effective because it liberalized not less than 20 towns and cities in Central Luzon from the influence or control of the rebels.

In a recent interview, Palparan denied that he was serving the government in an unofficial capacity as adviser in the national defense program.

His appointment, either to the National Security Council or Department of Defense, had been put on hold reportedly due to his controversial human rights record.

To Mariano, however, the Palparan design would "consequently bring the political killings to the urban centers, increasing nationwide the level of political killings that will further victimize innocent civilians."

The lawmaker warned that "where Oplan Bantay Laya I primarily victimized the peasantry, the Oplan Bantay Laya II will victimize anyone."

"Nobody is safe anymore," he said, adding that the first oplan, began in 2002, had claimed more than 800 victims.

Armed Forces chief of staff, Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., said during his visit on Dec. 15 to the Northern Luzon Command in Tarlac City that the first oplan "succeeded" in reducing the NPA strength from 12,000 in 2002 to 7,096 in 2006.

He denied that the new oplan would clamp down on human rights, saying its concept was mainly about "guarding freedom" that he called the "antithesis of communism."

"I look forward to a great 2007, full of optimism that we can finally defeat the threats to national security," he said.

22 traders in Albay charged with overpricing

By Ephraim Aguilar
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LEGAZPI CITY—AT LEAST 22 business owners in Albay found selling overpriced products after Supertyphoon "Reming" were charged by the Department of Trade and Industry here with violations of the Price Act while 11 others faced charges for selling deceptive and substandard products.

Jocelyn Blanco, DTI-Bicol's regional director, said the 22 business owners sold construction materials and candles at more than 10 percent of the prevailing price.

"After the typhoon, the Bicolanos needed GI (galvanized iron) sheets, umbrellas, common wire nails and candles but some businessmen took advantage of the huge demand for these commodities," Blanco said.

Jackie Misolas, 45, owner of the Anneraiz General Merchandise, one of the candle stores in this city that did not increase its prices, said an increase was not reasonable since factory prices remained the same even after Typhoons "Milenyo," Reming, and "Seniang."

Prices of candles commonly used by powerless households at Anneraiz, depending on the size, would range from P5.75 to P77 per piece. Misolas said these candles were non-drip and high-quality candles from Cavite.

Demand for candles increased as 86 percent of Albay still remained powerless after Reming destroyed power lines amounting to P198 million, Alex Realoza, general manager of the Albay Electric Cooperative (Aleco), said Friday.

GMA cools heels in Baguio vacation house

BAGUIO CITY—LOCAL OFFICIALS tried poetry to make President Macapagal-Arroyo smile on Saturday at the presidential Mansion here.

The President led this year's commemoration of Rizal Day at Burnham Park and hosted the ceremonies citing Baguio's outstanding citizens for the year at The Mansion, her official residence in the city.

But some of her guests found Ms Arroyo more taciturn than usual.

At The Mansion, Councilor Edilberto Tenefrancia encouraged the audience to give Ms Arroyo a standing ovation over reports that Philippine stocks had surged to a 10-year high due to her economic policies.

He said these policies were reason enough for "the economy to break through the dawn."

Baguio Rep. Mauricio Domogan cited Ms Arroyo's various achievements this year in Ilocano rhyme. Acting Baguio Mayor Reinaldo Bautista Jr. recited the Baguio hymn.

Their efforts managed to make Ms Arroyo beam, at least during the hour-long ceremony.

Mansion aides said Ms Arroyo and the members of the First Family had kept to themselves since Dec. 26, and the President appeared publicly only to meet with local officials.

She did not schedule media interviews and did not attend a bonfire organized by the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) on Friday night for reporters covering her holiday activities here.

Reporters had been waiting for her response to reports that the United States Embassy had reacquired custody of convicted rapist US Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith.

They were also interested in how she was handling the legal battle between First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo and Metro Manila-based journalists.

Reporters, however, did get Mr. Arroyo to say that he was pleased with his wife's economic achievements.

"I'm very proud of her, because look at the economic gains. The peso is very strong. The stock market is back to levels [of 10 years ago]," he said.

But the President, though offering a smile, glided by and quickly pulled Mr. Arroyo away from the reporters.

Assistant Secretary Jose Capadocia of the Office of the Press Secretary said Ms Arroyo was not hiding from the media.

"She loves the media. She understands their requirements so her instruction to us was to provide all the information that they would need," Capadocia told the INQUIRER on Friday.

A PIA official said Ms Arroyo failed to attend the bonfire due to an important meeting at The Mansion.

People attending the Rizal Day ceremonies at Burnham Park on Saturday also noticed that the President looked sullen.

"But we were happy she still showed up," said Francisca Valencerina, a retired teacher.

Valencerina was among the winners of the "Lucky Balikbayan" project of the "Silahis ng Pasko" program.

After the rites, she engaged Ms Arroyo in a brief conversation.

"I am here to invest my dollars in the country," Valencerina told Ms Arroyo.

Filipino-American Joan Caro, 19, was also glad to see Ms Arroyo at Rizal Park. Caro said she met the President in Malacañang last week as part of her tour as the reigning Miss Hawaii Filipina.

The event was sponsored by organizers of the centennial commemoration of Filipino migration to the United States. Caro said she won because of the song, "Paradise," which she wrote in honor of the Filipino *sakada* (sugarcane plantation workers).

Bautista said the President kept herself busy here by addressing "issues" during the holidays.
Vincent Cabreza and Desiree Caluza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

LYN RILLON

NO WALK IN THE PARK REALLY
President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo walk through the gardens of The Mansion, the presidential retreat in Baguio City, yesterday. Although there appears to be a hint of a smile on the President's face, reports out of Baguio said she had appeared taciturn and unsmiling most of the time she spent in the City of Pines.

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Palace pleads for unity in '07

MALACAÑANG SEES 2007 AS A "PIVOTAL year" for the country as it appealed for unity ahead of the national elections in May.

"As the year comes to a close, we have seen the agility and stability of our economy and we are optimistic—as everybody is—that 2007 will be a pivotal year for the Philippines," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

"The coming year will demand greater national unity and consolidation for the sake of sustaining our gains and greater determination and capacity to deliver on the hopes of the people," said Bunye.

Bunye issued the statement a day after Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs Gabriel Claudio said that winning credibly in the May elections was the main goal of the administration.

The Palace cited the glowing economic data, specifically the surging peso and stock market, as proof that President Macapagal-Arroyo's economic reforms were bearing fruit.

The peso has gained 7.6 percent since the start of 2006 to close the year at 49.03 to the US dollar, its highest finish in nearly six years.

On the other hand, the stock market ended 2006 with a hefty 42.3 percent gain. The Philippine Stock Exchange index soared to 2,982.54 at the last trading day. This was the index's highest close since April 1997.

Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

No Cha-cha talk for Joe de V, allies during holidays

By Michael Lim Ubac

SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA IS KEEPING HIS cards close to his chest but it's obvious that he's not about to relaunch Charter change (Cha-cha) anytime soon even after President Macapagal-Arroyo had announced that her administration would still vigorously pursue constitutional reforms.

In a telephone interview from New York City, De Venecia told the INQUIRER he had advised the majority coalition in the House of Representatives to desist from talking about Cha-cha during the holidays.

"We cannot afford to divide the country during the Christmas season," the Speaker said, stressing that the ban on talking about Cha-cha would last until the third week of January, when Congress resumes sessions.

Instead of thinking up ways to salvage the Cha-cha that was voted down by the Supreme Court recently, De Venecia advised the administration's allies to conduct national consultations instead.

Grassroots

"We need to hear the sentiments of the people from the grassroots because they will be the ones who will benefit from the shift (to a parliamentary system)," De Venecia said.

He, however, said the House majority should still decide whether or not to pursue the constitutional convention (Con-con) mode of amending the Constitution before the end of January.

"We would have wanted a constituent assembly (Con-ass) to amend the Constitution, but the Senate wouldn't budge," he said.

In order to convene Congress into a constituent assembly, both the House and the Senate must agree to it.

The House's attempt two weeks ago to convene a Con-ass without the participation of the Senate failed miserably after several sectors led by the Catholic Church called for a massive prayer rally at the Luneta.

The House was forced to retreat but to save face, it asked the Senate to pass a resolution allowing for the holding of an election of Con-con delegates simultaneously with next year's May elections.

De Venecia said the House had agreed to introduce Charter amendments through a Con-con, the mode most favored by the Catholic Church, Protestant bishops, big business and the Senate, "as the nation ponders changes to modernize its political system and economic policies and bring the Philippines [up] to the status of Southeast Asia's economic tigers."

That call [for a constitutional convention] also fell on deaf ears after the senators said they wanted to talk about Con-con only after next year's polls.

Following President Arroyo's renewed pitch for Charter reform, the administration-friendly Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (Ulap) is reportedly poised to file a second petition with the Commission on Elections to amend the Constitution through a people's initiative.

Although obviously unable to obtain support for Cha-cha domestically at this time, De Venecia found favor with the Centrist Democrats International (CDI), which represents 110 ruling and opposition political parties worldwide.

In a resolution, the CDI declared full backing for constitutional reforms in the Philippines and its proposed shift from a presidential to a parliamentary form of government in a major resolution adopted by the CDI Executive Committee.

Foreign support

The CDI Executive Committee, which convened recently in Spain, unanimously adopted the resolution "supporting the government of the Republic of the Philippines in its efforts to achieve constitutional reform."

De Venecia, president of CDI Asia-Pacific which was launched in Manila last January, received a copy of the resolution.

The CDI leaders cited the Philippine government's efforts to "bring about greater political stability and hasten economic development by shifting its system of government from the decades-old bicameral presidential to the unicameral parliamentary system."

The resolution from one of the "world's most respected and influential political coalitions," which has ruling parties and coalitions in Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia, came amid continuing public debates on proposed Charter amendments, De Venecia said.

"It represents a significant statement and moral support for Charter reform in the Philippines from one of the most influential political coalitions that has time and again dominated European politics with Christian ideals and thinking."

He said the CDI subscribed to the belief that the parliamentary system was responsible for the economic success and political stability of the rich nations of Europe and most of Asia.

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SLEX toll increase takes effect today

But higher rates only apply to ground level section, operator clarifies

By Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

STARTING TODAY, THE OPERATOR of the South Luzon Expressway will be charging motorists higher toll rates for the ground level section of the Skyway System from Alabang, Sucat and Bicutan to Magallanes or C-5.

The increases of 18 percent to 20 percent in the Alabang-Magallanes/C-5 sections of SLEX are being implemented even as the toll rates for the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) are being reduced by 10 percent.

The Skyway System is operated by Citra Metro Manila Tollways Corp., a joint venture between Citra Group of Indonesia and Philippine National Construction Corp.

The NLEX is operated by Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC), a unit of the Lopez Group of Companies. MNTC cited the strengthening peso against the dollar for the 10-percent reduction in toll rates in NLEX which also takes effect today.

While the toll for the ground level has increased, the rate (P85) remains unchanged for the elevated Skyway section from Bicutan in Taguig to Buendia in Makati.

"We hope this will encourage even more motorists to use the elevated section," Julius Corpuz, spokesperson of the Toll Regulatory Board, said in a statement. "This would result in faster travel time for those using the at-grade or ground level section."

Corpuz's statement is an acknowledgement that few motorists are using the elevated section because of its prohibitive price.

"Because of the higher rates, motorists using the ground level are in effect subsidizing those using the elevated section," Sonny Redor, an accountant, and regular user of SLEX, said yesterday.

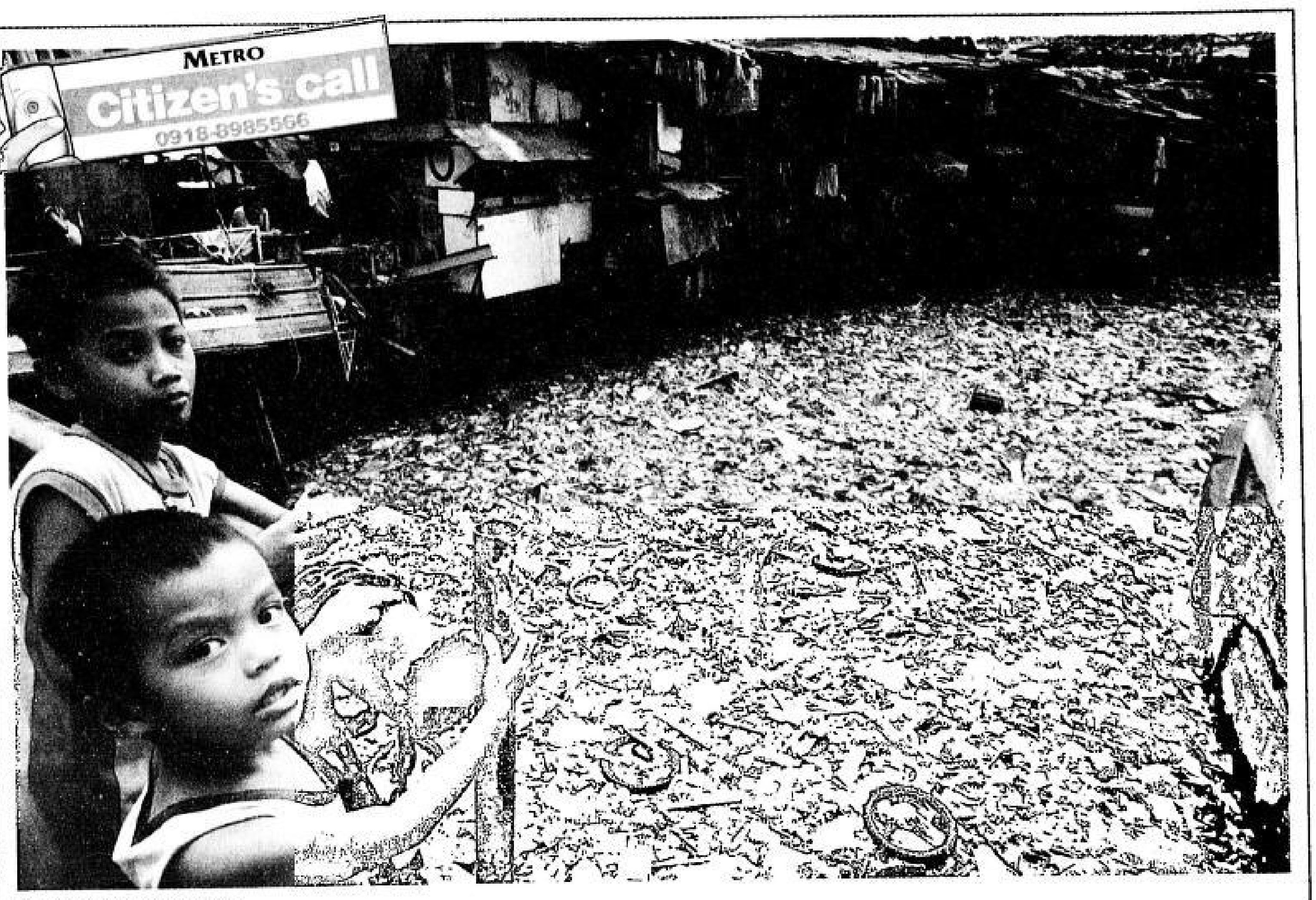
More than 200,000 vehicles use the SLEX daily.

For cars, the toll rose from P25 to P30 for the Bicutan to Magallanes or C-5 section; from P40 to P48 for the Sucat to Magallanes or C-5 route; and from P55 to P65 for Alabang or Filinvest to Magallanes or C-5.

From Alabang to Buendia, using the ground and elevated sections will cost a car owner a hefty P120.

For buses and light trucks or vans, the toll rose from P50 to P60 for Bicutan to Magallanes or C-5; from P80 to P96 for Sucat to Magallanes or C-5; and from P110 to P130 for Alabang or Filinvest to Magallanes or C-5.

For heavy and multi-axle truck and trailers, the toll rose from P75 to P90 for Bicutan to Magallanes or C-5; from P120 to P144 for Sucat to Magallanes or C-5; and from P165 to P195 for Alabang or Filinvest to Magallanes or C-5.



CLOGGED ESTERO
A text message sent to Citizen's Call by INQUIRER reader Joel, 40, a resident of Barangay Manresa, Quezon City, complained about an estero so full of garbage, it was impossible to see the water underneath. His text message went: "Yesterday, as I was on my way to Divisoria, I passed by the Estero de Magdalena near the corner of C.M. Recto and Jose Abad Santos. The estero was clogged with garbage and the stench unbearable. I hope something can be done about it before the rains come in order to avoid flooding in the area." REM ZAMORA

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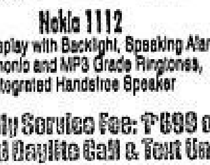

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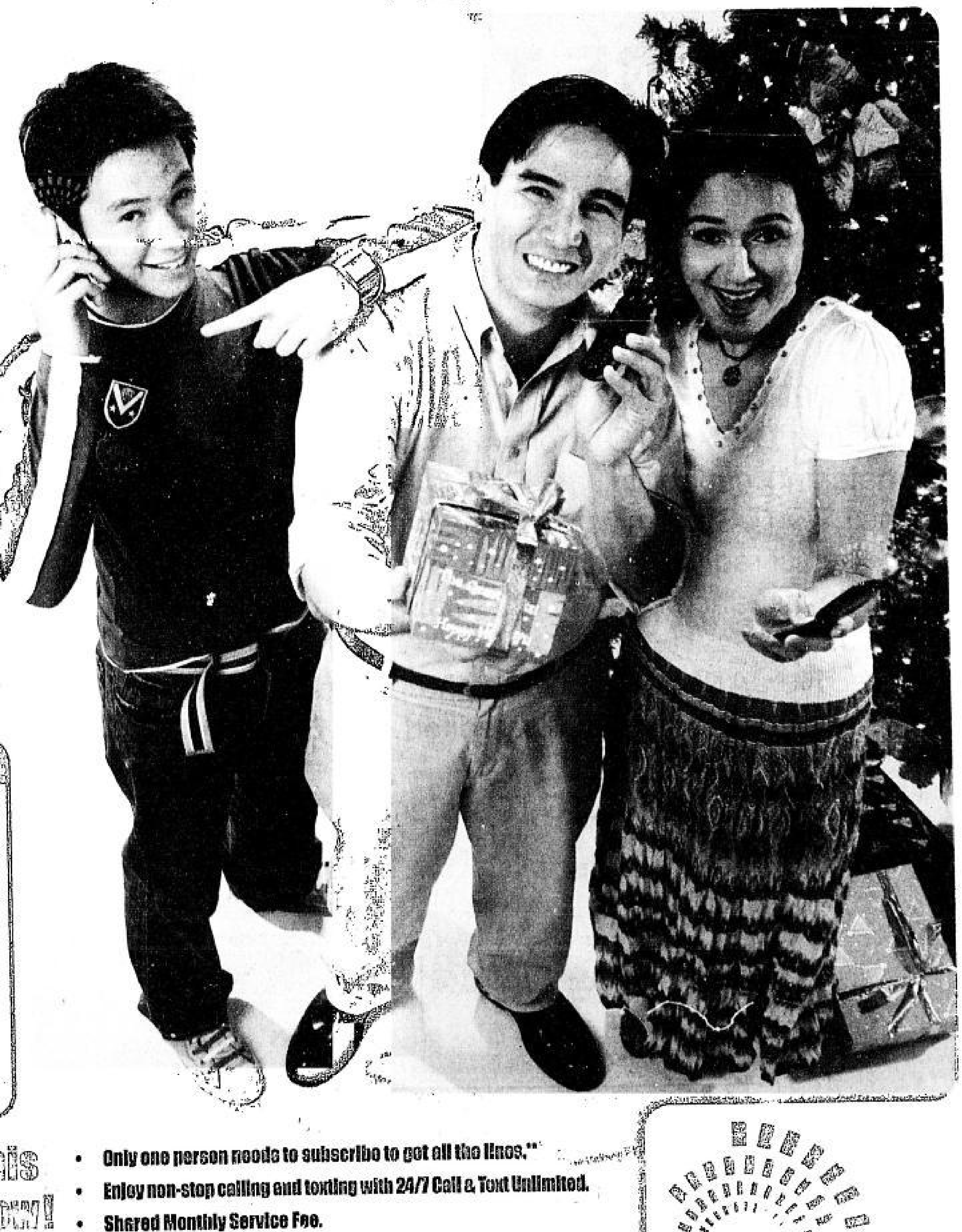

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CHECK the corner of 11th and Rizal Avenues in Caloocan City. Barkers, illegal terminals and vendors on sidewalks clog the street. Is this a sign of growth or lack of discipline?
LINDA GO, Caloocan City

Pakiusap kay MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando at Mayor Bernabe ng Parañaque na linisin ang overpass sa harapan ng Baclaran Church na ginawa ng bahay at tiangge. Wala nang madaanan ang tao bukod pa sa nagkalat ang basura.
RONALD VELASQUEZ, Imus, Cavite

Tricycle drivers in Project 6, Quezon City do not comply with the fare regulation. Tricycle drivers here overcharge their passengers.
O. PARAS, 31, Project 6, Quezon City

For the past few years, we've seen the big rise of scooters plying the major roads and with that comes the need for the riders to replace the original silent exhaust nozzles with the loud ones which produce a noise that is irritating to the ears any time of the day. Sometimes, it even acts as an air pistol. It blows hot air in your face as you are walking on the sidewalk. Is there any way for the concerned government agency to regulate such a practice?
R. PANINGBATAN, 37, Antipolo City

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THEY WERE NOT IN IT FOR THE money.

Instead, the group of unidentified men who broke into a bank in Makati City before dawn yesterday were just after a shotgun and a pistol kept in the guardhouse, police said.

"It's not a bank heist because they were already inside and they did not even open the drawers and the vault. And we were told there wasn't any money inside," said Makati police chief, Supt. Gilbert Cruz.

Security guards of the Rural Bank of Makati on the corner of Dian Street and Gil Puyat Avenue discovered the break-in at around 8 a.m. yesterday, Cruz said. No guard was on duty in the evening, he added.

Initial investigation showed that some of the suspects used the fire exit to break into the bank while others entered through a broken window. All they took, however, were the guards' service firearms—a shotgun and a 38-caliber pistol—in a guardhouse outside the bank.

"It wasn't an armed robbery. It was just a case of *salisi*, because their only intention was to take the firearms at the guard outpost. These were not professionals," Cruz said.

"We are also investigating the guards because it seemed security was lax as there was no one on duty at night," the police chief added.

The Makati Police Station has been closely watching the city's banks, particularly those inside the financial center. It was not clear, however, whether the rural bank, located outside the Central Business District, was among the banks in the list of tightly-monitored establishments.

DID YOU KNOW

FORT Santiago in Manila was Spain's major defense position in the Philippines. Construction started in 1571 and was completed about 150 years later by Filipino forced labor. It is also called the "Shrine of Freedom" in memory of heroic Filipinos who were jailed or killed there by the Spaniards and Japanese. Perhaps the most famous prisoner of Fort Santiago was Dr. Jose P. Rizal, who was led from the fort to Bagumbayan (now Rizal Park) on Dec. 30, 1896 to be executed by firing squad.

Cyril L. Bonabente,
Inquirer Research

Fake software, computers seized

By Margaux C. Ortiz

AGENTS OF THE NATIONAL BUreau of Investigation seized P6.5 million worth of computers and unauthorized software during simultaneous raids held recently in Makati and Pasig.

NBI Intellectual Property Rights Division chief Jose Justo Yap said that on Dec. 21, agents raided the CME Technology Philippines office on Rufino St., Legaspi Village, Makati City.

Also raided was Krebs Engineers Pacific/Krebs International, at 2907 One San Miguel Avenue, Ortigas Center in Pasig City.

Yap said Autodesk Inc., through company counsel Bengzon Negre Untalan Intellectual Property Attorneys, had filed a complaint against the owners of the two establishments at the NBI.

By virtue of search warrants issued by Judge Felixberto Olalia Jr. of Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 8, agents raided the offices and confiscated 24 desktop computers and a laptop computer containing unauthorized copies of Autodesk Inc. software.

The approximate worth of the seized items was placed at P6.5 million, Yap said.

Charges of violation of Republic Act 8293 or the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines are being readied against the owners of the companies.

METROBRIEFS

8 hurt in pillbox explosion

A SUSPECTED pillbox exploded in Malate, Manila the other night, injuring eight people. The victims were Elmer Estrada, 44 and his siblings Jomer, Jomar, John Henry and Erlyn, all residents of Anakbayan St., Malate. Their neighbors Lalaine Dandona, Noel Ignacio and Angelito Sagkal also suffered minor injuries. PO3 Crisanto Celestial of the Manila Police District Ermita Station said the incident took place at around 6 p.m. Saturday at the corner of Anakbayan and San Andres Streets. Ignacio was lighting some firecrackers when someone threw a pillbox on the street.

Margaux C. Ortiz

Illegal firecrackers, 'boga' destroyed

POLICE yesterday set fire to thousands of pesos worth of confiscated firecrackers and destroyed hundreds of "boga"—improvised noisemakers made out of PVC pipes. The move was in line with the Philippine National Police's crackdown on illegal fireworks to ensure the safety of the public during the New Year's Eve celebration.

Nancy C. Carvajal

NBI to boost forensic skills with new equipment

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INvestigation (NBI) will be purchasing a new DNA machine this year to improve the agency's forensic capabilities.

NBI Director Nestor Mantaring said that they are still processing the papers for the acquisition of the machine which would be placed in the bureau's forensic and chemistry division.

"Our old DNA machine has no capability of performing some important tests," Mantaring told the INQUIRER in an interview, adding that the old equipment could no longer analyze badly burned bones.

The old DNA machine was purchased in 1995 for P10 million.

Mantaring stressed that the new machine would be a big help to the bureau's elite Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) team.

The team—composed of highly-technical people such as medico-legal officers, expert technicians or morticians, fingerprint experts, DNA technicians, dentists and photographers—has been described as "one of the best in Asia and in the world."

"Our DVI team is very experienced," the NBI director said.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNICATIONS
LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE
East Avenue, Quezon City
E-mail Address: ltombox@lto.gov.ph • Website: www.lto.gov.ph

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. RIB-2006-790
21 December 2006

TO All Regional Directors, Assistant Regional Directors, and Heads of District Offices / Extension Offices and Other Officials and Employees Concerned, This Office

SUBJECT Mandatory Validation of Emission Testing Results in the LTO IT Project's System

Pursuant to Department Order Nos 2005-34 and 2005-37, prescribing the rules and regulations governing the authorization of Private Emission Testing Centers (PETC) and PETC Information Technology (IT) Providers, all PETCs are required to be connected to the LTO-IT System on an online and real-time basis through their respective PETC-IT Providers allowing the verification of the emission test results at the LTO District Offices prior to motor vehicle registration.

With this, LTO officials and employees shall accept only emission test results that are verified and authenticated online, real-time under the DOTC/LTO-IT System effective January 2, 2007.

The following are the guidelines in the processing of motor vehicle registration.

1. The system will verify and accept only motor vehicles with "Passed" emission test results for renewal registration of "Private" and "Exempt Private" vehicles and if combined with any miscellaneous transaction, otherwise, a rejection letter will be generated;
2. The system will not validate emission test results of other motor vehicle classifications and type of transactions;
3. If the motor vehicle has no corresponding emission record, a rejection letter will be generated (See Annex A for sample);
4. The system will only accept emission test results issued by the DOTC/LTO Authorized Private Emission Testing Centers (PETC) connected to the LTO-IT System online and real-time, otherwise, a rejection letter will be generated (See Annex B for the list of duly authorized PETC-IT Providers).

All orders/memoranda in conflict herewith are deemed superseded.

For strict compliance.

REYNALDO I. BERROYA
Assistant Secretary

(PDI - Dec. 30 & 31, 2006; & Jan. 1, 2007)

NOTICE TO THE MOTORING PUBLIC

Pursuant to DOTC Department Orders 2005-34 and 2005-37, the DOTC/LTO is mandated to efficiently and effectively implement the emission standards for motor vehicles as provided by the Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999 through the implementation of the ***PETC-ITF Interconnectivity Project***.

The PETC-ITF Interconnectivity Project allows the interconnection between the PETC's and the existing DOTC/LTO Information Technology System (DOTC/LTO IT System). With a three-way matching capability, the PETC-ITF Interconnectivity Project permits online authentication with the LTO-IT System which immediately locks the Certificate of Emission Compliance (CEC) number to the accredited testing centers and the motor vehicle record, which would subsequently prevent the re-issuance of the CEC to another motor vehicle.

Effective **JANUARY 2, 2007**, the public is strongly advised to have their motor vehicle emission test processed by DTI Accredited and DOTC/LTO Authorized PETCs that are connected online and real time to the LTO-IT system and bearing this seal .

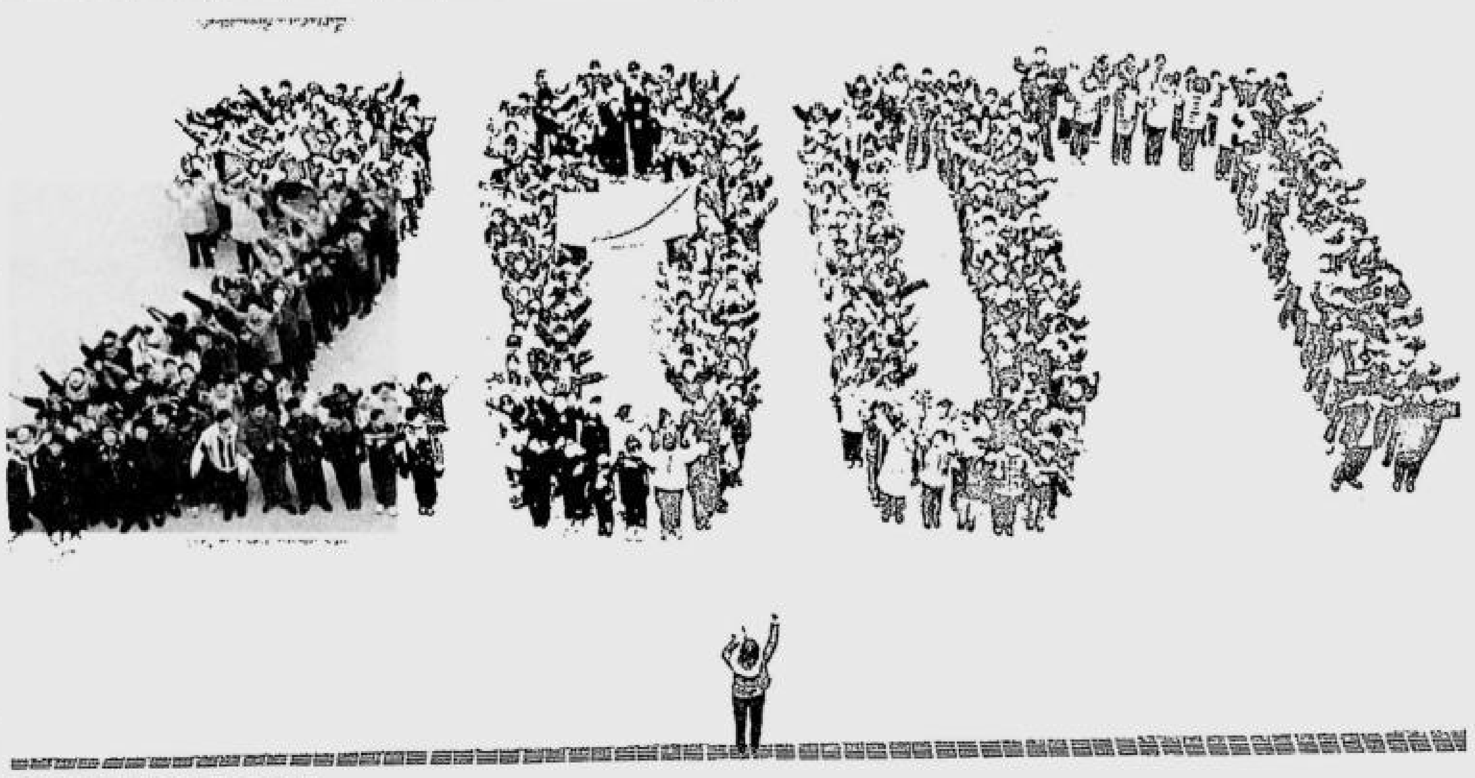
REYNALDO I. BERROYA
Assistant Secretary
LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE

Lagi Tayong Ok!
NO to Fake CECs !
NO to Smoke Belchers !
YES to Clean Air !
SERVING THE PUBLIC FOR 94 YEARS

(PDI - Dec. 30 & 31, 2006; Jan. 1, 2007)

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**



NEW YEAR WELCOME
PUPILS line up to form the numbers "2007" to celebrate the upcoming New Year at a school in Hefei, in east China's Anhui province Dec. 31.
REUTERS

Australia's PM warns of Pacific instability

SYDNEY—PRIME MINISTER John Howard has warned that Australia needs to work hard to prevent South Pacific island nations falling into the hands of hostile groups causing instability.

Howard said in a media report that Australia would need to play a major role in the region for the next 10 to 20 years to prevent instability in countries such as Papua New Guinea, Fiji, East Timor and the Solomon Islands.

"The South Pacific has the enduring problems of poverty, bad governance and corruption, and what we're trying to do is do something about both. It's in our interests strategically, historically and sentimentally," he said in the Sunday Telegraph.

"I can understand Australians saying, 'Well, look, let's forget about it. Leave them to their own devices; don't waste any money,' but that's the wrong approach to take, because they will fall into the hands of the evil from other countries."

Howard, who has recently sent forces to East Timor and the Solomon Islands to help restore law and order, said Australia was in a difficult position because of allegations of interference.

The conservative prime minister has repeatedly rejected attempts to paint Australia as the "sheriff of the Pacific."

The description has lurked ever since former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said Australia would never be accepted in the Asia-Pacific region because it acted as a "US deputy sheriff."

"It's very hard, because you get some early gains, then, as the shoes start to pinch, they start saying, 'This is going too far, you're bullying us, you're interfering," Howard said. *AFP*

Bombs rock Iraq after hanging; 77 dead

BAGHDAD—CARNAGE GRIPPED IRAQ AFTER Saddam hussein was executed on Saturday when 77 people died in bomb attacks and December became the deadliest month for American forces in more than two years.

In the hours after Saddam swung from the scaffold in the capital, a car bomb exploded in a fish market in the town of Kufa, a triple bombing ripped through a Baghdad neighborhood and another blew up outside a children's hospital.

Although it was not clear whether the attacks were masterminded by Saddam extremists to avenge his death, the abyss of civil strife into which Iraq has sunk since the US-led invasion has cast a shadow over Shiite celebrations.

Doctor Monther al-Ithari, the health director in the Shiite province Najaf, said 31 people were killed and another 58 people wounded by the car bombing in Kufa, most of them women and children shopping ahead of the Eid al-Adha feast.

Police Col. Ali Jrawi said that the vehicle, a Korean-made Kia, had been parked in a popular fish market when it exploded, ripping through the weekend crowd preparing for the four-day Muslim feast.

Kufa, a small town south of Baghdad near the Shiite pilgrimage center of Najaf, is a stronghold of radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, who has an office there and whose father was killed during the Saddam regime.

A few hours later, a triple car bombing ripped through a mainly Shiite area of north Baghdad, adding at least another 37 corpses to the grim daily toll.

Three vehicles exploded in rapid succession in a well-coordinated attack on the Shiite-Sunni district of Hurriyah, unleashing chaos and carnage.

In addition to the dozens of dead, hospitals struggled to cope with the scores of wounded, which security and military sources said ran to 76 people.

Yet another car bombing, this time outside the Al-Iskan children's hospital north of Baghdad, killed at least two people and wounded eight.

Two people were killed and three wounded when a fourth car bomb exploded near a mosque in the Sunni district of Adhamiyah after nightfall, a security source said. *AFP*

For Arabs, Saddam's death is 'eye-for-an-eye'

RIYADH—SADDAM HUSSEIN'S death by hanging conforms to the adage "an eye for an eye" but his execution on a major Islamic holiday also seems vindictive to many Muslims.

Capital punishment is practiced throughout the Arab and Islamic world, ranging from public beheading by the sword in Saudi Arabia to hanging and firing squad in most countries.

Saddam went to the gallows after being found guilty of killing and other crimes against the Shiite people of Dujail after Shiite militants tried to assassinate him there in 1982.

In a recent court appearance he said he preferred to die a hero's death, shot by firing squad rather than face the humiliation of hanging like a common criminal.

The logic of killing him to match the suffering he inflicted was clear to Muslims performing the haj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, who sympathized with him for his anti-US stances.

"In Islam when you kill someone you should be killed in the same manner," said Abu Lutfi, from Egypt.

Saddam had no reputation for showing mercy, and oversaw the murder of Baath party rivals denounced as traitors at a televised meeting in 1979.

His life in return for the lives of 148 Iraqis pales in significance when set against the hundreds of thousands thought to have died at the hands of his regime, which ran one of the most brutal dictatorships in modern history.

The list of those who longed to see justice for other crimes is long, including Iraqi Kurds, Iranians and Iraqi Sunni dissidents.

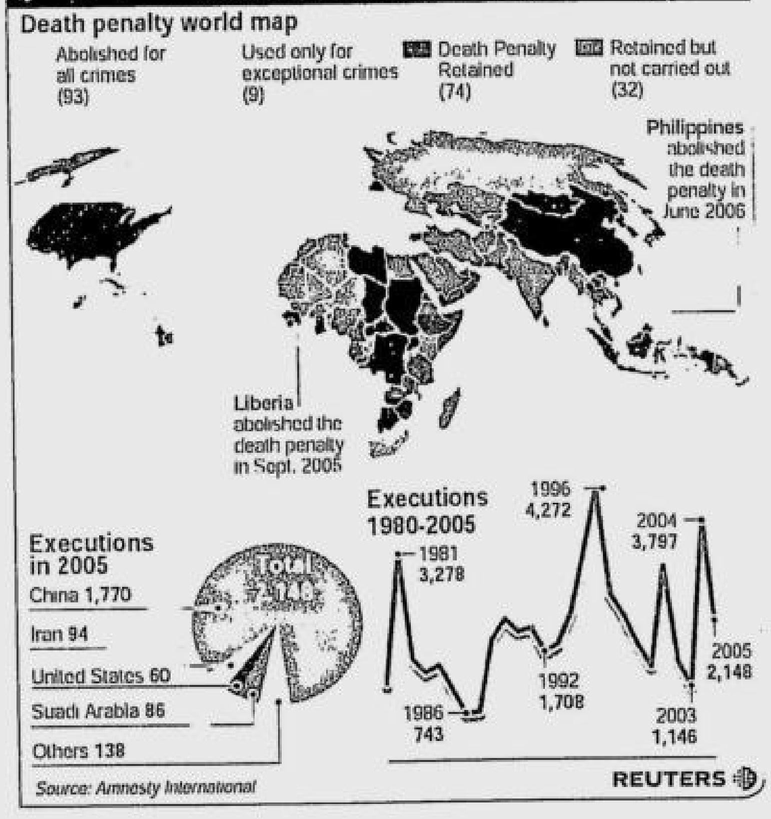
Kurds will be disappointed that Saddam will not be convicted of genocide against them in a second trial that had just begun.

It was the 1988 chemical gas attack on Kurds in what is known as the "Anfal," or "Spoils of War," campaign that did more than anything else to demonize Saddam in the minds of people around the world in the lead-up to the US-led invasion of 2003 that ended his three-decade grip on Iraq.

"It's well-known that it takes tyrants to take out a tyrant," Saudi pilgrim Hisham al-Zubeidi said.

But the decision by Iraq's Shi'ite government to put Saddam to death during the Eid al-Adha holiday could add to a growing divide between Shiites and Sunni Arabs in the Middle East. *Reuters*

WORLD EXECUTIONS



Source: Amnesty International
REUTERS

Ford praised as a healing hand in US funeral rites

WASHINGTON—FORMER US President Gerald Ford was honored at funeral services Saturday as a modest man who guided the United States through the traumatic aftermath of the Watergate scandal.

A flag-draped casket bearing Ford's body was carried to the Capitol Rotunda, where Vice President Dick Cheney delivered a speech praising Ford for his most criticized decision—pardoning Richard Nixon.

Cheney, who served as a young man as Ford's chief of staff, said Ford "was almost alone in understanding that there can be no healing without pardon." During a time of "great malice" following Nixon's resignation in 1974, Cheney said Ford's decision saved the country from division and disaster.

"It was this man, Gerald R. Ford, who led our republic safely through a crisis that could have turned to catastrophe," Cheney said.

"We will never know what further unravelings, what greater malevolence might have come in that time of furies turned loose and hearts turned cold." In September 1974, Ford delivered an unconditional pardon for any crimes Nixon may have committed, a move that Nixon's opponents viewed as unjust and led to speculation that a deal had been cut beforehand.

Ford was also remembered for his lack of pretense and his reputation for honesty. "Few have ever risen so high with so little guile or calculation," Cheney said.

The outgoing Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dennis Hastert, said Ford provided a steady hand at a difficult moment in history.

"We needed a healer. We needed a rock. We needed honesty, candor and courage. We needed Gerald Ford," Hastert told mourners.

The 38th president's casket, accompanied by family members, arrived in the early evening at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington before a motorcade drove through the suburb of Alexandria where Ford had lived for years with his family. *AFP*

Oil prices seen lower this year

LONDON—CRUDE OIL PRICES could head lower in 2007 from current levels of about $60 per barrel, as global production catches up with demand and geopolitical risks lessen, experts say.

Despite hitting record highs in July, oil futures in New York ended the year about 1.5 percent lower than at the beginning of 2006, with futures in London up just 2.0 percent.

"This year, the main story has been the political risks story," Global Insight oil analyst Simon Wardell said.

In 2006, amid an already tight supply situation, concerns about geopolitical instability in producer regions pumped prices higher and led to the all-time highs above $78 per barrel in July and August.

The threat of UN sanctions against Iran over its nuclear stand-off with the West led the Islamic Republic to hint at threatening disruption to its oil exports, which in turn sent prices surging.

In Nigeria meanwhile, militant attacks on oil facilities in the Niger delta have slashed the African country's output by up to a third.

Prices were also supported this year by the July conflict between Lebanon and Israel, worsening violence in Iraq, and a hardening of relations between the United States and South American oil giant Venezuela. *AFP*

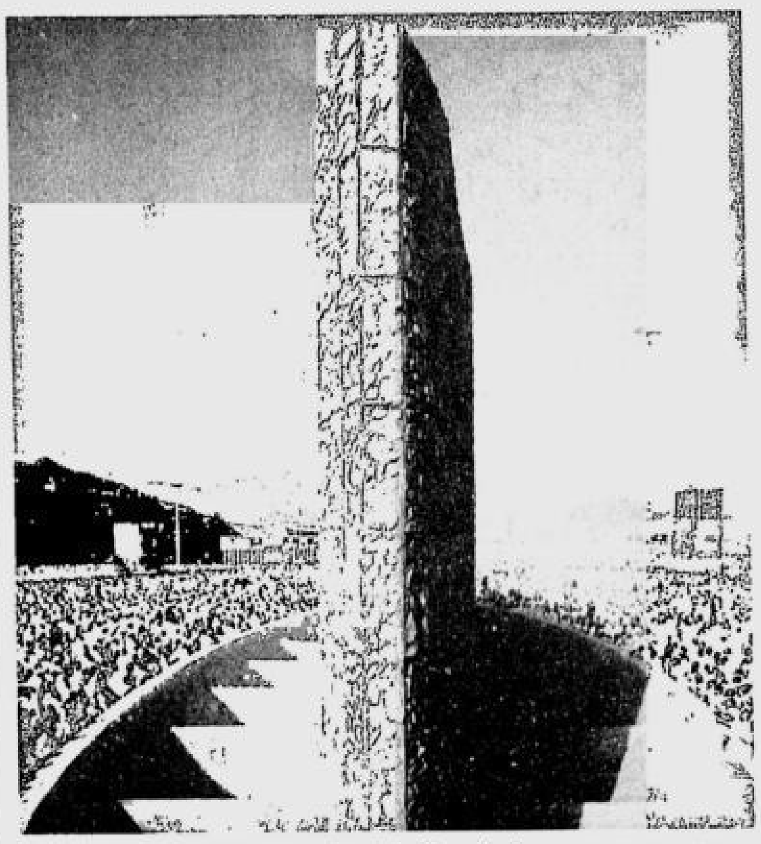
Spaniard is oldest woman to give birth

BARCELONA—A 67-YEAR-old Spanish woman has become the oldest known woman to give birth after the Barcelona Hospital de Sant Pau said Saturday she had given birth to twins by Caesarean section.

A hospital spokeswoman told AFP that the unnamed woman and her offspring, whose sex was not revealed on grounds of patient confidentiality, were doing well.

According to Barcelona media outlet Catalunya Informacio, the babies, her first children, were still in an incubator following their birth late Friday.

The woman became pregnant after she received invitro fertilization treatment in South America. *AFP*



STONING SATAN Thousands of Muslim pilgrims cast stones at one of three huge stone pillars in the symbolic stoning of the devil in Mina, Saudi Arabia, Dec. 30.
AP

WORLDBRIEFS

Arnie surgery

LOS ANGELES—California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger was released from the hospital here Saturday, following successful surgery on his right leg to fix a broken bone. The Hollywood action-hero-turned-politician fractured his right femur Dec. 23 while skiing in Sun Valley, Idaho, and underwent a 90-minute operation Dec. 26 to knit the broken bones back together. "His femur is beginning to mend nicely and I expect him to have a full and speedy recovery from this injury," Doctor Kevin Ehrhart, Schwarzenegger's orthopedic surgeon, said. *AFP*

Annan's final bow

UNITED NATIONS—Kofi Annan steps down as secretary-general at midnight Sunday, leaving behind a global organization far more aggressively engaged in peacekeeping and fighting poverty—but struggling to restore its tarnished reputation. Taking office six years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Annan helped preside over a decade that saw the world unite against terrorism after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, then divide deeply over the US-led war against Iraq which toppled Saddam Hussein. At a farewell news conference earlier this month, Annan said he considered his top achievements the promotion of human rights, fighting to close the gap between extreme poverty and immense wealth, and the UN's campaign to fight AIDS and other infectious diseases. *AP*

Over 500 missing

SEMARANG—Indonesian authorities scoured the choppy waters of the Java Sea Sunday in search of more survivors after a ferry sank in a storm leaving 500 people missing, officials said. At least 109 people have been found alive after washing ashore or being lifted from life rafts by rescuers on boats and helicopters, officials said. Search and rescue worker Karolus Sangaji said it was unclear how many people had died because no bodies had been found, though witnesses said they saw dead people. "I don't want to speculate on how long people can survive floating on the sea, we only hope they can survive," he said. *AP*

All drinking water should be ...

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Water Stores

QUEZON CITY

Arayat, Cubao
Greenhills, Santolan
Katipunan, St. Ignatius Vill.
Shorthorn, Project 8
Roosevelt, Sn Francisco Del Monte
Juan Luna, New Capitol
ABS CBN Compound
Kamuning Road
V. Luna Road
Mindanao Avenue
Visayan Ave., Galas
Sta. Mesa Hts.
Tandang Sora Ave., Pasong Tamo
North Olympus, Zabarte
East Fairview Park Subd.
Susano Road,Novaliches
Krus Na Ligas, Diliman
Tailpapa, Novaliches
Fulgencio, Brgy. Bungad
Sct. Lozano, Laging Handa
Chico, Project 2
V. Encarnacion B.F. Homes
Sangandaan, Quirino, Novaliches
Road 1, Batasan Hills
Visayas Ave., Project 6
Eastwood Ave., Libis

MANILA

Dapitan, Sampaloc
Ma. Clara St., Sampaloc
MH Del Pilar, U.N. Ave., Ermita
Dian cor. P. Ocampo
Gen. Malvar, Singalong
EGI Taft Tower,Taft Avenue,
Zaragosa St., Tondo
Pilar, Manuguit, Tondo
Earnshaw St., Sampaloc
Tejeron St., Sta. Ana
Severino Reyes St., Tondo

SAN JUAN

Tiffany Mansion Eisenhower, Greenhills
N. Domingo St. Bo. Balong Bato

CALOOCAN

M. H. Del Pilar cor. 6th Ave., Gracepark
P1 P1 B17 L7 Bagong Silang
Geronimo Street
Makaneneng, Bagong Barrio

MALABON

Mc Arthur Highway, Potrero

VALENZUELA
Balubaran St., Malinta
Garlando St., Marulas

MUNTINLUPA

National Road, Putatan
Gutierrez Bldg., National Road

LAS PIÑAS

San Antonio Valley 7, Pulang Lupa
Aguirre Avenue, Pilar Village
Retenas,Dona Matilde Subd.
BF Almanza

PASIG

Greenpark Village, Manggahan
Lifehomes Subdivision, Rosario
Evangelista St., Santolan
P. Burgos St., San Jose
Doña Juana Subd., Rosario
Strata 100 Bldg., Emerald Ave.
Dr. Sixto Avenue, Rosario
Dr. Sixto Avenue, Maybunga
East Ortigas Mansion Ortigas Ext.
Siudad Del Mejia, A. Rodriguez Avenue
Dr. Garcia St. Bambang
East Capitol Drive, Barangay Kapitolyo
Karangalan Village, Manggahan

MARIKINA

Shoe Avenue, Sta. Elena
G. Del Pilar St., Parang
C Panorama St., SSS Village
A. Bonifacio St., Tañong

MANDALUYONG

Aglipay St., Brgy. Pag-asa
759-A Nueve De Febrero

MAKATI

Kalayaan Avenue, Guadalupe Nuevo
Magsaysay Avenue, Guadalupe
Campos Rueda, 1 Urban Avenue
Bautista St., San Isidro
Primo Rivera St., La Paz

PASAY

Mornington Place, Taft Ave., cor. Villareal Street
2482-C Park Avenue
E. Flores Street, Malibay

PARAÑAQUE

Col Ballecer St., Signal Village
Severina Ave., KM. 18
Champaca St., Western Bicutan
Kamagong St., Multinational Vill., Phase 4
Concha Cruz Drive, BF Homes
Nersan Bldg. Quirino Ave. Don Galo
M.L. Quezon St., Purok 2, Lower Bicutan, Taguig

RIZAL

Gen. Luna St., Dulong Bayan St., San Mateo
P. Felix Ave., San Isidro, Cainta
PFCI Brgy. San Andres, Cainta
Buen-mar Ave. Greenland, Cainta
P. Oliveros St., Antipolo City
A National Rd., Calumpang, Binangonan
St. Michael Homes, Pantok, Binangonan
Naval St., Taytay
National Road, Ilog Pugad, Taytay
Sumulong Hi-way, Mayamot, Antipolo City

PAMPANGA

Paraiso, Sindalan, San Fernando
Fatima Village, Sta. Cruz, Porac
Santo Rosario St., San Jose, Angeles City
Brgy. Nueva Victoria Mexico
Sitio Sto. Cristo Masangsang, Mexico
Paralaya St., San Matias, Sto. Tomas
Olongapo Gapan Road Dolores, San Fernando
Mc. Arthur hi-way Purok 1, Kapalangan, Apalit
Pear St., Hensonville, Angeles City

BULACAN

Cruz na Daan, San Rafael, Bulacan
Metrogate Subdivision, Meycauayan
National Road, Moson, San Jose Del Monte
Grand Royal Subd., Malolos

ZAMBALES

Brgy. Rosete, San Felipe
E. National Road, Brgy. Rizal, San Antonio

OLONGAPO

Subic Bay Freeport Zone

DAGUPAN

33 Zamora Street

TARLAC

Odonell Settlement Center, Capas
Balibago, Primero, Tarlac City
Q. Teresa Commercial Complex, Tibag
Ley-anna Bldg., Hilario St., Ligtasan

CAGAYAN VALLEY

Cenro 3, Claveria

BATANES

Brgy. Kaychanarianan, Basco

ABRA

Poblacion, East Pidigan

NUEVA ECIJA

San Juan North Cabiao

PANGASINAN

Pasibi East, Urbiztondo
Brgy. Palamis, Marcos Ave., Alaminos City
Pandan Avenue, Poblacion, Mapandan
Zone 4, Villasis, Pangasinan

LA UNION

ZRS Bldg., Eremando St., Ortiz, Naguilian

NUEVA VIZCAYA

San Geronimo, Bagbag, Nueva Vizcaya

TAGAYTAY

Crossing West, Mendez , Tagaytay City

MINDORO
Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro
San Vicente South,Calapan, Oriental Mindoro

CAVITE

Sanlan Road, Sea Breeze Subd.,Cavite City
Brgy. Pinagbuklod, Bahayang Pag-asa
Binakayan, Kawit
Rosario Arcade, Niog, Bacoor
Salitran Road. Salitran 3 Dasmariñas
Camella Homes, West Springville, Molino
Potente Bldg., Gen. Trias St., Cavite City
ACM Woodstock Homes, Alapan, Imus
Meadowood Exec. Village, Bacoor
Tirona Hi-way, Dulong Bayan, Bacoor
Mabini St., Alfonso Cavite City
Dasmarinas, Cavite

LAGUNA

Quezon Avenue., Sto Angel Sur, Sta. Cruz
B. Lopez Ave., Los Baños
Golden City Subd., Sta Rosa
Paseo Country Market Tagaytay Highway, Sta. Rosa
Rizal St., San Pedro
Km. 50 Parian Calamba
National Hi-Way Brgy., Pulo, Cabuyao
KMOR Appliances National Hi-way, Sta. Rosa
Tatlong Hari Street, Sta. Rosa
San Lorenzo St., Balibago, Sta Rosa
Emerald St., Umali Subd., Los Baños
Gen Luna St., Pila
Maharlika Drive United, San Pedro
Masagana St., Katapatan Homes, Cabuyao
Pastrana Bldg., Real, Calamba
Tagaytay Hi-way, Pulong, Sta. Cruz, Sta. Rosa
Luxery Homes, Mabuhay City, Cabuyao
Biñan, Laguna
Brgy. Marinig Cabuyao
Pacita Complex, San Pedro

BATANGAS

Makalintal Avenue, San Jose, Batangas City
Paz St. Balayan, Batangas City
Sta.Rita Karsada,Batangas City
Gen. Luna St., Bo. Sabang, Lipa City
San Rafael St., Bauan, Batangas City
Margarita St., Nasugbu
Tabora Bldg. P. Torres St., Lipa City
CNM Bldg., Ellustre Ave., Lemery
Bagalangit, Mabini, Batangas
P. Genato St., Batangas City
Brgy. Balagtas, Batangas City
Barangay II, Sto. Domingo St., Calatagan
Malaruhatan Country Club, Lian

ALBAY

Zone 2 San Carlos, Tabaco City, Albay
Imperial Court Subd., Legaspi City
Brgy. 3 Pioduran, Albay City
Marquez St., Old Albay Legaspi City
St. Raphael ST., Tigib, Tiwi, Albay

CAMARINES SUR

Dayangdang St., Naga City
San Ciris St., Pasacao

SORSOGON

Quezon St., Polvorista Sorsogon, Sorsogon City
Caloocan, Matnog

CEBU

PLANTATION BAY, Mactan
Cogon Carmen
Basak, Mandaue City
Dayson Bldg., I Wireless, Mandaue City
Dap-Dap St., Mambaling, Cebu City
Inayawan, Talisay
Duterte St., Banawa, Cebu City
Kawit, Medallin, Cebu City
Kinasang-an, Pardo, Cebu City
Pajac, Lapu-Lapu City

NEGROS ORIENTAL

Airport Road, Balocboloc, Dumaguete City

NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

Yunque St., Brgy 1, Poblacion, La Carlota City
Natividad St., Carmela Valley Homes, Talisay City

PAGADIAN CITY

Sabado cor. V. Sagun St., Pagadian City

AKLAN

Balabag, Malay
Boracay Island

LEYTE

Romualdez Avenue, Brgy.San Antonio, Alang-alang
Sogod Southern , Leyte
Lilia Avenue, Cogon, Ormoc City
JCR Arcade, Aplitong Road, Tacloban City

MASBATE

Rosero St., Masbate City
Arizala St., Cataingan

SOCSARGEN

Magsaysay Street, General Santos City
J. Catolico Avenue, Lagao, General Santos City
Christ the King Village, City Heights, General Santos City
Brgy. Calumpang, General Santos City
Gen. San Hts., General Santos City
Tupi, South Cotobato
Amorao Subd., Brgy. Sta. Cruz, Marbel
Pablo Bldg., Morales Avenue, Koronadal City

SURIGAO DEL SUR

E.G.J. Bldg. Espiritu Street, Mangagoy, Bislig City

DAVAO

Lacor Bldg., Elpidio Quirino Avenue, Davao City
J.P Laurel Avenue., Bajada, Davao City
Michael Village, Ma-a, Davao City
Mercedes Benz Executive Homes , Matina, Davao City
Boulevard Trading, Davao City
PFP Roperos Bldg., Highway, Toril, Davao City
De Lara St., Calinan, Davao City
PFP Roperos Bldg., Highway, Toril, Davao City
Cartier Bldg., Buhangin, Davao City
National Highway, Lanang, Davao City
Landmark, Panacan, Davao City
Cabaguio Ave., Davao City
National Highway, Bangkal, Davao City

DAVAO DEL NORTE

Panabo City, Davao del Norte
Sison Subdivision, Tagum City
National Highway, Tagum City

COTABATO

Don Rufino Alonzo St., Cotabato City
Episcopal Bldg., Sinsuat Ave., Cotabato City
Rizal Ave., Kabacan, Cotabato
National Highway, Cotabato Airport, Cotabato City

NORTH COTABATO

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SPORTS

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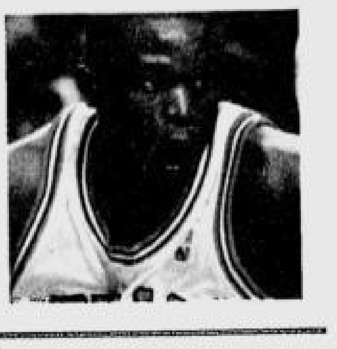


Pacquiao-Barrera rematch off

By **Salven L. Lagumbay**, *Contributor*

THE MUCH-AWAITED REMATCH BETWEEN MANNY Pacquiao-Marco Antonio Barrera is off—for now.

A top official of the World Boxing Organization, who has been in constant touch with Golden Boy Promotions, revealed yesterday that Barrera has already been scheduled to defend his World Boxing Council super featherweight title against fellow Mexican Juan Manuel Marquez on March 17 in Las Vegas.

"I have just been informed that it's (the Barrera-Marquez bout) already made," said WBO vice president for Asia Pacific Panoncillo, who is coordinating with GBP and Cebu's SGG Promotions to hold the second edition of the World Cup next year in the Philippines.

"I think Pacquiao will have to fight another opponent."

Panoncillo is coordinating with Cebu boxing officials to tie loose ends for the staging of the World Cup, which will be a duel between top Filipino fighters against their Mexican counterpats.

Barrera is being promoted by Golden Boy Promotions, which is trying to get the promotional rights of Pacquiao from Bob Arum's Top Rank

GBP chief executive officer Richard Schaefer had earlier proposed a 50-50 deal for a possible Barrera-Pacquiao rematch on March 17 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Schaefer dismissed an earlier announcement by Pacquiao that he had chosen Arum to remain as his promoter.

He also gave Pacquiao until Monday (Tuesday in Manila) to make up his mind, even as he urged the Filipino fighter to be his own boss, instead of listening to people around him who "have been giving him wrong information."

Arum, who attended the Manila Hotel press conference where Pacquiao announced his choice of Top Rank, said Schaefer's 50-50 proposal was a good sign that GBP was opening up the negotiation process for a Pacquiao-Barrera rematch.

However, Schaefer refused to negotiate with Arum who, according to the GBP official, did not have the promotional rights over Pacquiao.

Arum had announced that should a Pacquiao-Barrera rematch falls through, he would give Pacquiao an opponent of his choice for an April 28 bout in Macau, China, for a purse of not less than $2 million.

The fight date, however, is too close to the May 5 Oscar De la Hoya-Floyd Mayweather Jr. showdown, which is considered by experts as the biggest boxing event in recent memory and expected to become the highest-grossing pay-per-view attraction.

After scoring a second straight knockout victory over Mexican great Erik Morales last November, Pacquiao said his next goal is to fight Barrera, whom he stopped in their nontitle clash in 2003.

The promotional row was a result of Pacquiao's signing up with GBP last September only to reject it later in favor of Top Rank following his second conquest of Morales in Las Vegas.

PRO LEAGUE IN 2006

PBA on track to recapturing its old magic

THE PHILIPPINE BASKETBALL Association scaled new heights on a year many thought would be another tough season for Asia's first play-for-pay league.

Significant improvements in gate receipts, live attendance and television ratings were achieved, re-establishing the league as the best sports-marketing tool in the country.

A phenomenal increase of more than 74 percent in live attendance marked the league's rejuvenation with more than 314,000 turning up for the games in several Metro Manila venues compared with 423,000 last year.

That increase gave the league an average of 6,647 fans per game, an increase of about 63.15 percent compared with the 2004-05 season. Though it was not the league's all-time high, the figure was easily the biggest since 1997.

Free to fans

A total net income of more than P77 million doubled last season's P37 million take, this despite the fact that the league had opened several sections of venues on special days free to its fans.

Total revenues also increased by P26 million, from P157 million to P183 million.

"The gains we built the past year are just part of the PBA's resurrection," said last season's board chair Ely Capacio of San Miguel Beer, whose goal of bringing the crowd back at season's start is starting to bear fruits.

"The fundamentals were laid down by my predecessors and my job, with the help of my fellow governors, was merely to follow up on them and back them up by passing certain policies and procedures," said the mild-mannered former player-turned-corporate executive.

"Remember, I was just a ninth of the entire board. With the cooperation of the entire board (of governors), we were able to see the light."

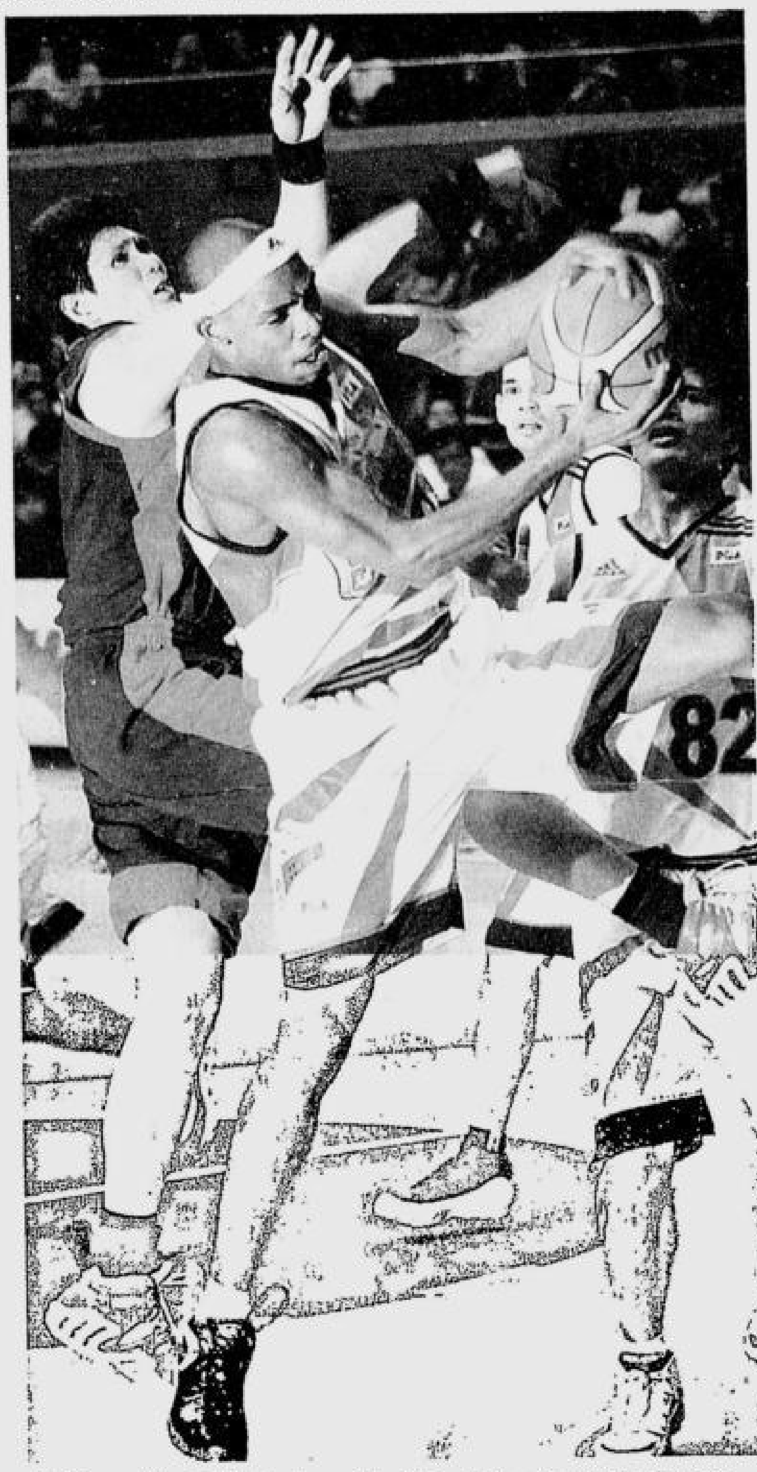
New season format

Up there was where the PBA was headed.

League commissioner Noli Eala institutionalized a season format of two conferences, from its usual three, resolved different controversial issues, made a clear stance on where the PBA stands as far as the national team is concerned, and kept an eye out for expansion without sacrificing the playing field.

Along the way, a fruitful deal with ABC-5 was locked into place

PBA/A24



NEW stars like Gabby Espinas of San Miguel Beer (center) add to the PBA's pulling power at the box office and on TV. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

No holidays, just gym work, for Giants, Realtors

GAME WEDNESDAY
(*Cuneta Astrodome*)
7 p.m.—Purefoods vs Sta. Lucia

BOTH CAMPS ADMIT THEY only have only themselves to blame for their disappointing finishes in the classification round of the Talk 'N Text-PBA Philippine Cup.

As a form of self-punishment, they spent the holidays in the gym.

Cancelled were the short trips to the United States for the Fil-Ams and out-of-town vacations for the homegrown players.

The Purefoods Chunkee Giants and the Sta. Lucia Realtors are toiling in the gym this Yuletide season as the two teams prepare for a game that will decide the last outright quarterfinalist in the PBA's centerpiece event. The loser will join the Alaska Aces, Air 21 Express and the Coca-Cola Tigers in the wild-card phase.

The 7 p.m. playoff, set at the Cuneta Astrodome, is something that Purefoods and Sta. Lucia could have avoided by just winning one of their last two games.

The Giants and the Realtors, however, insist they've put their follies behind them, and both look forward to redemption in the setto scheduled on Jan. 3.

"It's now a reality that we have to face," said Sta. Lucia coach Alfrancis Chua. "We've been working hard in practice and we'll give it our best shot."

Said Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio: "We don't talk about the past, we just look forward to coming out hard on Jan. 3."

Chua and Gregorio expect a tough battle, just like their first two games that were decided by no more than four points.

"Our two victories were far from convincing," said Gregorio as he acknowledged the fact that his Giants went through the proverbial eye of the needle to win both games. "Both boiled down to endgame executions. We could be in for another tough game."

But a healthier Marc Pingris could give the Giants tremendous boost. Pingris, still recuperating from a bout with amoebiasis, struggled in their last game against Alaska Milk.

"My doctor didn't want me to play, but I wanted to help the team," said Pingris.

The reigning Most Improved Player has a job cut out for him versus Sta. Lucia's prized rookie Kelly Williams, who's been averaging 16.7 points and 10.5 rebounds per game.

Other key match-ups in this contest are Dennis Espino versus Kerby Raymundo, Marlou Aquino against Jun Limpot, Kenneth Duremdes versus James Yap, and Paolo Mendoza against Roger Yap.

TOKYO DOUBLES

Gabica, De Luna 3rd; Taiwanese rule

DE LUNA (left) and Gabica ponder their next shot against the Koreans.

ASIAN GAMES STANDOUTS ANTONIO Gabica and Jeffrey De Luna trounced Koreans Jeong Young-hwa and Kim Woong-dae, 9-1, to secure third place in the 2006 Mezz Crowd Nine Cup billiards tournament late Saturday in Tokyo.

The Filipino duo, who pulled off a gold-silver 9-ball singles finish in the recent 15th Asiad in Doha, Qatar, won 400,000 yen (about P168,000).

Taiwan's Yang Ching-shun and Wu Chia-ching nipped former world champion Kunihiko Takahashi and the prodigious Hatayo Hijikata of Japan, 10-7, to win the Scotch doubles event. The Taiwanese pocketed the top purse of 1 million yen.

Wu, the 2005 World Pool winner, and Yang, the two-time Asian Games 9-ball gold medal winner, moved into the title duel with a 9-7 decision of Gabica and De Luna earlier.

Gabica and De Luna could have contended for the title as they opened up strongly against the Taiwanese. They led, 5-1 and 6-3, before Gabica had a scratch that allowed the Wu-Yang pair to grab an 8-7 lead.

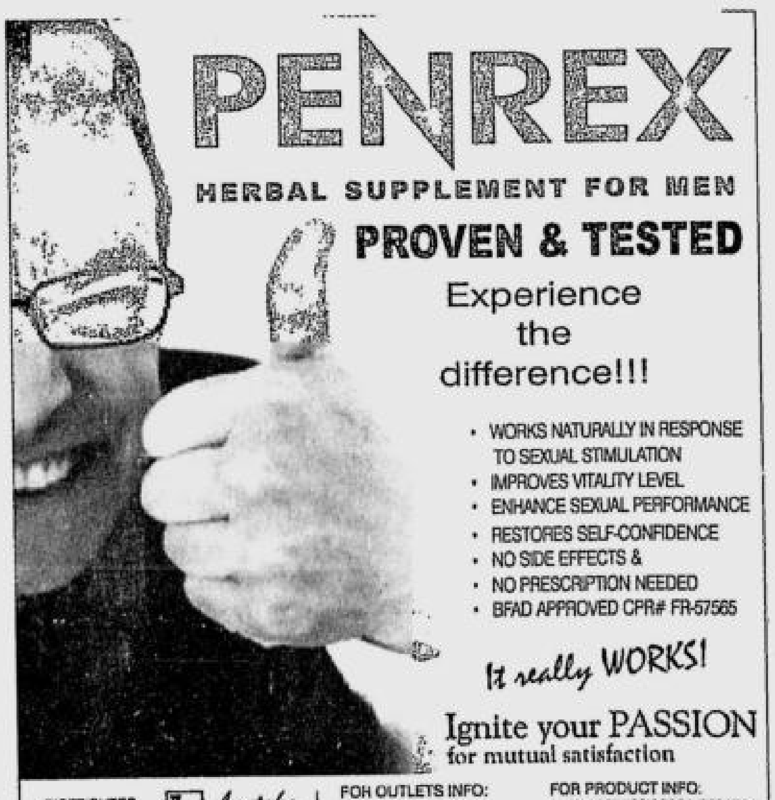
The Filipino tandem had a chance to send the match into a hill-hill ending, but Gabica's break in the 16th rack resulted in a difficult layout, and De Luna went on to make a bad shot that the Taiwanese duo pounced on to clinch the match.

"We did our best, but the breaks went against us, particularly in the latter part of the match," Gabica said.

"The draw also did not favor us because we met the Taiwanese in the first match. It could have been a different story if we met them later," added Gabica, who also grabbed a silver in the 8-ball in Asiad.

Takahashi and 17-year-old Hijikata, the 2005 Austria World Junior runner-up, settled for the 600,000-yen runner-up prize.

Marlon Bernardino, Contributor



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Jinggoy caught in a win-win situation

BARE EYE

Recab Trinidad

CHEERS! WE'VE GOT A FRESH NEW Year and Sen. Jinggoy Estrada must be told he's in a position to issue the game-turning assist that should result in total renewal for Philippine basketball.

All Jinggoy has to do is keep steady and refuse to be distracted by a discredited group that still wanted to have a say in the game.

We mean here the selfish sector from Basketball Association of the Philippines (BAP) which on Friday tried to reject Estrada's well-applauded agreement with business tycoon Manny V. Pangilinan.

* * *

For the record, Estrada, reigning president of the BAP, and Pangilinan have joined hands and sealed a pact which should effectively result in the lifting by the International Amateur Basketball Federation (Fiba) of its suspension of Philippine basketball.

As agreed, Pangilinan will be president and Estrada chair of the Samahang Basketball ng Pilipinas (SBP), a body composed of well-meaning and responsible sectors in Philippine basketball.

The discredited BAP sector, however, tried to thumb-down the Estrada-Pangilinan team-up.

The group, obviously goaded again by the dreaded BAP sec-gen Graham Lim, claimed it has not been consulted and insisted on having a say in charting local basketball affairs.

* * *

You are reading about this dastardly try only today.

It's like this. The discredited BAP group again tried to use media to elevate its selfish intent.

The good news is that a solid and responsible sector in the national sportswriting community readily sensed the ill designs of Graham Lim & Co. and thereby threw their press release into the nearest garbage can.

Your reporter here manned the INQUIRER sports desk on Friday and had the chance to go over the cock-eyed claims by Lim's group.

It's with joy and gratitude that we applaud the timely move by sports editors of the country's leading dailies, namely Ted Melendres of the INQUIRER, Ding Marcelo of the BULLETIN and Lito Tacujan of the STAR.

"We all know it's again Graham Lim who's behind this move to thumb-down the Pangilinan-Estrada working agreement," said Ding Marcelo, who spearheaded the ban on the disruptive press release.

* * *

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada must've also read about that snide move by Lim's group only now.

The message here for Jinggoy, from those who sincerely care for RP basketball is: There's no turning back.

The ball is in your hands, senator.

You're also in the perfect spot to create a winning basket for Philippine basketball.

For one, Lim's group, while insisting on rightful representation in the Samahang Basketball ng Pilipinas, has no business claiming it has worked for the betterment of RP basketball.

For the record, Lim & Co. had repeatedly succeeded in making the Philippines a laughing stock in international basketball tournaments.

* * *

These ignominious results were specifically the reason the BAP was banned by the Philippine Olympic Committee.

Now, it goes without saying that the POC, headed by president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, will come up with the vital moves to make what Estrada and Pangilinan have started a complete success.

Just like with Estrada, the POC chief is in a position to start the New Year with one heroic act—for renewal of Philippine basketball.

A Happy New Year to all!

Quiñahan paces PBL player race

By Jasmine W. Payo

WHEN THE PBL SILVER CUP RESUMES ON SATURDAY, FIVE BIG MEN WILL find themselves on top of the heap.

STANDINGS	W	L
Henkel Sista	6	2
Mail and More	5	2
Hapee-PCU	5	2
TeleTech	4	3
Toyota Otis	4	3
Harbour Centre	4	3
CL-Pera Padala	3	5
Magnolia	2	6
Kettle Korn	0	7

GAMES SATURDAY
(Olivarez Sports Center)
2 p.m.—Mail and More vs Kettle Korn-UST
4 p.m.—Hapee-PCU vs Harbour Centre

Mail and More's JR Quiñahan led in the efficiency rating halfway through the elimination round with 18.71 points.

The jumbo-sized 6-foot-5 center averaged 14.71 points, 9.43 rebounds and a league-best 3.14 blocks per game.

A recruit from the disbanded Granny Goose, Quiñahan struggled in his early outings before regaining his explosive inside game.

"He's a marquee player," said Mail and More coach Lawrence Chongson. "He's proving to be a vital cog of this team. He's a veteran."

Nigerian rookie Sam Ekwe came in second at 17.71 even as he rode the bench as a disciplinary measure in Magnolia's last outing.

Intimidating at 6-foot-8, Ekwe led the league in rebounds at 11.86 on top of 9.86 markers and a second-best 2.43 blocks.

But while Quiñahan towed the Comets to a strong 5-2 start, Ekwe and the Spinners languished near pits with a 2-6 slate.

"We still lack team play," said Ekwe, the reigning NCAA Most Valuable Player and Rookie of the Year.

Power forward Dennis Daa got a huge lift from his double-figure scoring in the last four games with the Toyota Otis Sparks.

The underrated stalwart climbed to third at 16.86 with averages of 13.14 points and 8.43 boards.

Cebuana Lhuillier-Pera Padala star Ken Bono occupied the fourth spot with a 15.71 rating.

More than just powering his way into the paint, Bono, the UAAP MVP, displayed a good shooting touch to emerge as the scoring leader with 17 points per game, apart from norming 6.14 rebounds and 1.3 assists.

Magnolia's Yousif Aljamal rounded out the top five at 13.63 after posting a fourth-best 13.62 points and 6.4 boards per contest.

Point guard Macky Escalona of Cebuana Lhuillier-Pera Padala also came to the fore by ruling both in assists at 6.57 apg and in steals at 2.57 spg.

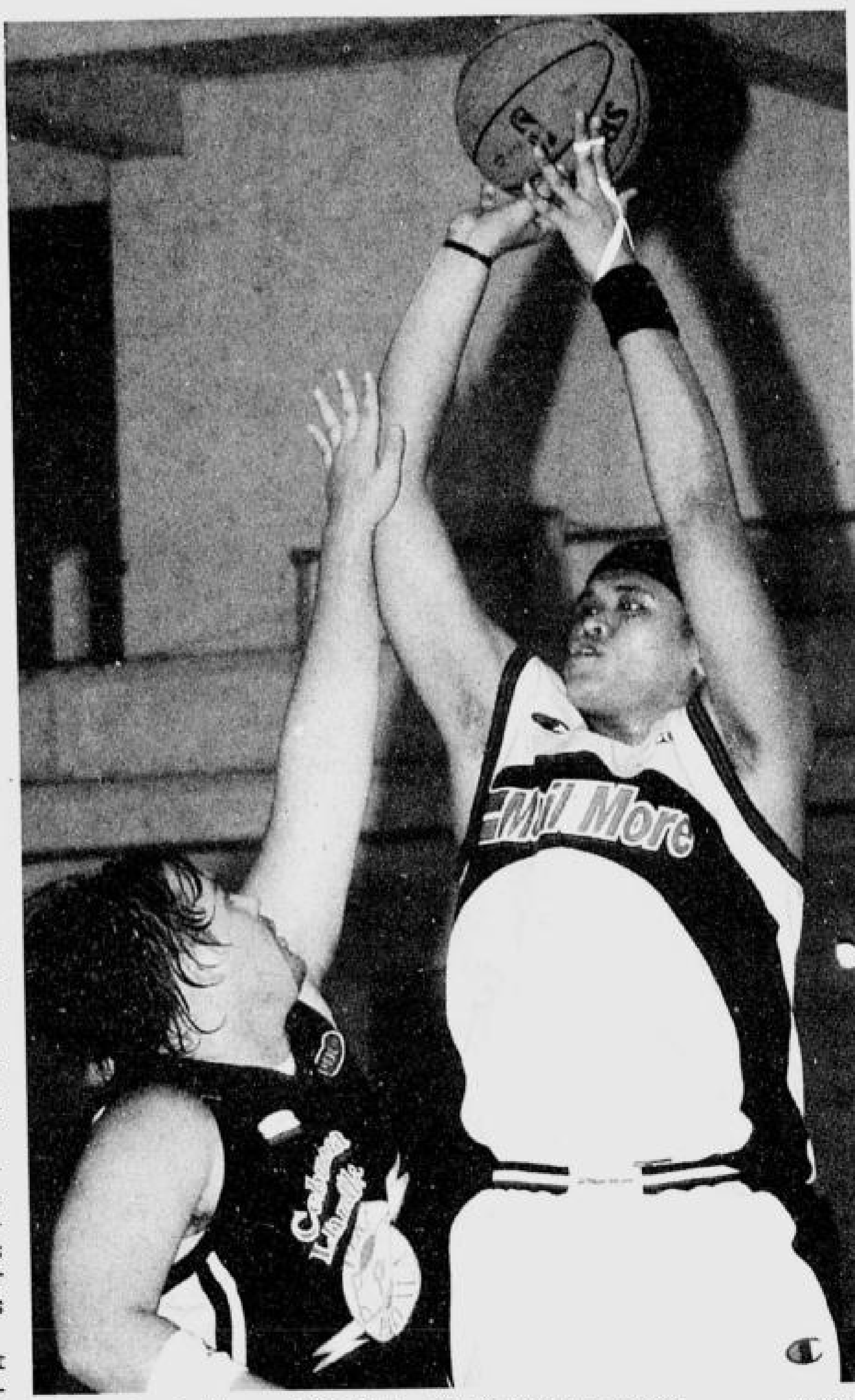
Aside from Ekwe, other top rookie performers were Henkel Sista's Kelvin Gregorio with 11.75 points and 7.5 rebounds and Hapee-PCU's Mark Borboran with 10.14 markers and eight boards.

The league will resume on Saturday at the Olivarez College Sports Center in Parañaque.

Mail and More will battle the winless Kettle-Korn UST at 2 p.m., followed by the 4 p.m. tussle between Hapee-PCU and Harbour Centre.

Henkel Sista claimed the solo lead before the two-week holiday break with a 6-2 record.

Mail and More and Hapee-PCU shared the second spot with 5-2 slates.



BIG numbers for big man JR Quiñahan (right) of Mail and More. ERIK ARAZAS

Pro league on track to recapturing old magic

From page A23

and official games were held overseas.

The draft, pre-season exhibition games and All-Star Weekend have also turned into highly visible and marketable events.

On court, Purefoods and Red Bull provided the thrill, rising beyond the more established and star-laden ball clubs to become the face of the PBA season.

Clutch Game 7 win

The Barakos drew first blood by beating the Giants in six games of the import-laced Fiesta Conference finals, claiming their third championship in five years. The title run included a clutch Game 7 win over favorite Barangay Ginebra in the semifinals.

A conference later, Purefoods evened things up, bagging the Philippine Cup at the expense of Red Bull as it clinched the title in six games of the series. Making the victory sweet for the Giants was their amazing comeback from a 1-3 deficit against the Alaska Aces in the semifinals.

From team success came individual feats.

James Yap was the biggest winner, bagging Most Valuable Player honors over teammate Kerby Raymundo and Red Bull's Enrico Villanueva, both of whom figured in a tightly fought race for the Best Player of the Conference award (Fiesta Cup).

19 straight games

Danny Seigle also had his share, scoring 20-plus points in 19 straight games to win Best Player honors in the Philippine Cup, Larry Fonacier became the lowest-drafted player in 15 years to win Rookie of the Year, Ryan Gregorio was chosen Coach of the Year by the PBA Press Corps and Jun Limpot finally won a league title after 13 seasons.

It was not all roses for the league, however.

Long-time PBA member Formula Shell bowed out of the league, Purefoods reserve center Eugene Tejada met a tragic fall on Mother's Day that left him paralyzed for some time before he showed signs of recovering (he's now in the US undergoing extensive rehabilitation program) and Red Bull was fined a total of P500,000, including P100,000 against coach Yeng Guiao, for briefly walking out in Game 5 of its semifinal series against San Miguel in the Philippine Cup.

In all, the year was a smashing success for the PBA, making Eala and current chair Ricky Vargas of Talk 'N Text upbeat over the league's 32nd season when Welcoat becomes its newest member team.

Breaking records

Under his chairmanship, Vargas laid out his plan for the league to build its own coliseum and at the same time, take a shot at breaking a decade-long PBA record (1996) behind the so-called "20/20 vision" or increasing by 20 percent the live gate attendance to boost net income, hopefully, by 20 percent.

So far, the league appears on track to achieving both.

Probable sites for the PBA Dome have been identified in Quezon City and Taguig while early returns in gate receipts and attendance—both of which increased by 18 and 20 percent, respectively, during the same period of the last Philippine Cup—had the league enjoying one of its finest starts in years. *With Musong R. Castillo*

Wesley: So young, so good in 2006

Top 15 Filipinos as ranked by Fide (January list)

1. GM Mark Paragua (2573); 2. GM Rogelio Antonio Jr. (2551); 3. GM Eugene Torre (2547); 4. IM Rogelio Barcenilla Jr. (2503); 5. IM Joseph Sanchez (2482); 6. IM Oliver Dimakiling (2481); 7. IM Darwin Laylo (2476); 8. IM Jayson Gonzales (2458); 9. IM Idelfonso Datu (2457); 10. FM John Paul Gomez (2455); 11. IM Ronald Dableo (2453); 12. IM Wesley So (2451); 13. FM Roland Salvador (2437); 14. IM Enrique Paciencia (2432); 15. GM Bong Villamayor (2425)

WESLEY SO: Ahead of 2 GMs

PARAGUA: Declining form

ANTONIO: Still No. 2

A CHILD PRODIGY WENT ON a romp in 2006, surpassing two Grandmasters in the process.

It was a stunning year for 13-year-old Wesley So, even if GM Mark Paragua remained as the Filipino ranked highest by the world chess federation (Fide).

Paragua's Elo dropped to 2573 from 2609, however, after a series of poor performances in the chess Olympiad and several international events.

GM Rogelio Antonio Jr. stood second best with 2551, followed by GM Eugene Torre (2547).

So, meanwhile, impressively strung up records as quickly as he piled up victories.

The wonder kid from Bacoor, Cavite, became the youngest RP Olympian at 12. By the time he turned 13, So became the youngest ever national champion, the youngest International Master and the youngest player to obtain a GM result.

With such conquests, So climbed to No. 12 in the January 2007 Fide list with an Elo of 2451, finishing ahead of GMs Buenaventura Villamayor (2425) and Nelson Mariano (2422).

So will kick off his campaign at the 2007 Asian Zonals in Vietnam set Jan. 10-19 together with Paragua, Ronald Dableo, Oliver Dimakiling and Darwin Laylo.

The freshman high school student recently missed his second GM result in the 2006 Singapore Masters and in the 1st PGMA International Open held in Manila.

The National Chess Federation of the Philippines president and Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay Jr. expects more Filipinos to achieve GM results in 2007.

"We're aiming for four to six GM results," said Pichay. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

World Cup of boxing in Cebu set March 4

By Salven L. Lagumbay, *Contributor*

THE SECOND EDITION OF THE Mexico vs. Philippines World Cup of boxing will take place on March 4 in Cebu City.

"The World Cup between the Philippines and Mexico is on," said promoter Sammy Gello-ani of the SGG Sports Promotion/ALA Boxing Gym, who is coordinating the event with Golden Boy Promotions of boxing great Oscar De La Hoya, during a press conference yesterday.

Gello-ani said the date has been approved by the GBP to give way to the mammoth March 17 Marco Antonio Barrera-Juan Manuel Marquez showdown.

"With the go signal from the Golden Boy, everything can now go on even without anything yet from the television," stressed Gello-ani, who has already made initial discussions with local television outfits for the coverage of the fight.

WBO vice-president for Asia Pacific Leon Panoncillo, who flew in just to make the formal confirmation of the event, also announced that the World Cup already has the blessing of WBO president Paco Valcarcel.

He said that GBP president De la Hoya and his partners Bernard Hopkins and Shane Mosley are expected to fly to Cebu for the event. Also expected to grace the event are GBP CEO Richard Schaefer and international matchmaker Sampson "Picasso" Lewkowicz.

The event, backed by Icelink Watch, will feature WBO super bantamweight king Daniel Ponce De Leon defnse of his title against the undefeated Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista, while WBO superfly king Fernando Montiel will also defend his title against Z "The Dream" Gorres.

A planned WBO bantam showdown between reigning champ Jhonny Gonzalez and Gerry Peñalosa is still being worked out, although organizers said that should the Gonzalez camp insist on not fighting, they might replace that with the WBO junior flyweight defense of Hugo Cazares possibly against Rodel Mayol or Bert Batawang.

There will be seven bouts in the card made up of three world title match-ups, one intercontinental bout, and three non-title events that would still pit Filipino versus Mexican fighters.

Submission of weights today for Roligon 5-cock derby

OFFICIAL ENTRIES IN THE NOCHE BUENA 5-COCK Derby, the season opener at Roligon Mega Cockpit, will be accepted today from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. The first batch of 75 participants collide tomorrow while the next batch join the battles on Thursday. Qualifiers will compete for the title on Saturday. Participants with 2.0 points in the eliminations will share in the P100,000 day prize. Those with one point can field a new entry with no extra entry fee needed, said Lacsina. Hosts Ronnie Lacsina and Dr. Boy Tuazon, who will be assisted by Jerry Ang and Ben4 Nadurata, pegged the entry fee at P7,700 and minimum bet at P3,300. The derby's sponsors are Lakpue Drug Inc. and Thunderbird Enertone. For reservation of cockhouses, call 851-2275, 833-1638 or 0918-9001411.

LOOKING AHEAD

Another great year for Woods

LOS ANGELES—AMID all the changes in store for the US PGA Tour in 2007, expect one thing to stay the same: Tiger Woods will again reign supreme.

The season starting with the Mercedes-Benz Championships at Kapalua, Hawaii, on Thursday is being touted by US tour officials as a "new era" in golf.

The revamped schedule includes the 33-week FedEx Cup season, in which players earn points to make it into the PGA Tour playoffs for the FedEx Cup.

Those four tournaments, ending with the Tour Championship in September, are designed to cap a streamlined season in dramatic style.

WOODS: Dominant

MICKELSON: Meltdown

SCOTT: Unassuming

"It's interesting, it really is," Woods said of the new system. "It's so different that we've never experienced anything like this before.

Also in the mix will be the 35 million dollars in bonus money awarded at the conclusion of the playoffs, including a whopping 10 million dollars to the FedEx Cup champion.

Whatever fervor is whipped up by the big money finale, Woods himself promises to remain golf's most compelling story.

The game's undisputed heavyweight champion closed 2006 with eight victories and three runner-up finishes in his final 11 stroke-play events, all in the wake of his father's death in May.

When he launches his 2007 campaign at the Buick Invitational at Torrey Pines, California, on January 25, Woods will be going for a seventh US tour victory in as many starts.

In April, he will arrive at Augusta National seeking the third leg of the "Tiger Slam" at the Masters, having won the final two major championships of 2006, the British Open and US PGA Championship.

While Woods rides the crest of a wave into the new season, many of those who would seek to challenge him will be hoping for a fresh start in 2007.

Phil Mickelson, who won his third straight major title at the 2006 Masters, suffered one of the worst meltdowns in major championship history at the US Open, where he had the tournament in hand before a double-bogey at the final hole that handed the victory to Australian Geoff Ogilvy.

Mickelson was barely a blip on golf's radar the rest of the year, while Ogilvy, despite his increased confidence, was under no illusions as to just how hard it is to challenge Woods.

Australian Adam Scott, ranked fourth in the world, made it clear that Woods remains the yardstick by which all golfers are measured.

"It might take awhile, but if I was to be No. 1 in the world at some point in my career, then I think that would be the best achievement I could ever do in golf, to get past Tiger Woods," Scott said. *AFP*

WOODS with wife Elin

Tiger, wife expecting first child

LOS ANGELES—TIGER WOODS had double cause to celebrate on Saturday when he announced on his 31st birthday that his wife Elin will give birth to their first child next year.

"We are expecting our first child this summer," the American world number one said on his official Web site.

"Obviously, we couldn't be happier and our families are thrilled. I have always wanted to be a dad. I just wish my father could be around to share the experience."

Woods's father Earl died in early May this year after a long battle with cancer. His son took a nine-week break from golf to deal with his father's illness and subsequent death before ending the 2006 PGA Tour with eight victories, including two majors.

Woods and Elin Nordegren of Sweden married in October 2004, and Woods has said that he wanted children sooner instead of later. He did not say when in the summer the baby is due, although it likely would be between the U.S. Open and British Open.

The world's No. 1 player is skipping the season-opening Mercedes-Benz Championship next week on Maui.

"I'm going to stick close to home for the next few weeks," he said.

Woods will start his '07 season in the Buick Invitational at the end of January. *Inquirer wires*

Top trainer, Delp; 74

LAUREL, MARYLAND—HALL OF Fame trainer Grover G. "Bud" Delp, who saddled Kentucky Derby and Preakness champion Spectacular Bid among his near 3,700 winners, has died, officials said on Saturday.

Laurel Park officials said Delp died of complications from cancer late on Friday at his Ellicott City home. He was 74.

Inducted into racing's Hall of Fame in 2002, Delp saddled 3,674 winners, ninth on the all-time list, and his horses won purses totaling nearly $41 million.

Delp, a lifelong Maryland resident, is best known for training Spectacular Bid, who won the Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes in 1979. In 1980, Delp earned an Eclipse Award as the top trainer for guiding Spectacular Bid through an undefeated season. *Reuters*

Bulls spoil LeBron's 22nd birthday

CHICAGO—LUOL DENG SCORED A CAREER-high 32 points and nabbed six rebounds Saturday as the Chicago Bulls beat Cleveland, 103-92, to spoil LeBron James's 22nd birthday.

Ben Gordon scored 21 points and fellow reserve PJ Brown added 13 and 10 rebounds for the Bulls, who had 55 of their total points come from the bench.

The Bulls trailed, 67-60, when Larry Hughes made a 16-foot jumper with 7:16 left in the third quarter.

However, Chicago went on a 24-0 run over the next 9:50 to take a commanding 84-67 lead with 9 1/2 minutes left in the final period.

Deng shot 15-of-19 from the field and posted his second strong game after spraining his right wrist on a flagrant foul by Miami's James Posey on Wednesday.

He had surgery on the same wrist during the 2004-05 National Basketball Association season.

The third-year forward has scored 57 points on 26-of-35 shooting over the last two games for the Bulls, who improved to 12-0 at home against Eastern Conference opponents.

Cleveland star James scored 33 points and grabbed nine rebounds for the Cavaliers, who shot 45 percent and fell to 1-5 when allowing an opponent to reach the 100-point mark.

"They turned up the pressure and the jump shots and attacks we were making in the first half stopped going for us," said James, who tweaked his right ankle during the fourth quarter but didn't think it was serious. "Chicago is a great team at home. They went on that big run, and it killed us."

In Orlando, Florida, the Orlando Magic took advantage of an injury-depleted Miami Heat on Saturday to snap their National Basketball Association skid.

Dwight Howard scored 18 points and grabbed 10 rebounds and Trevor Ariza added 16 and 10 off the bench to lead the Magic to a 97-68 pounding of the defending champion Heat, who were without NBA finals Most Valuable Player Dwyane Wade for the second straight night.

Leading 32-31 with 10:21 left in the second quarter, Orlando went on a 16-6 run to close out the half and take a 48-37 lead.

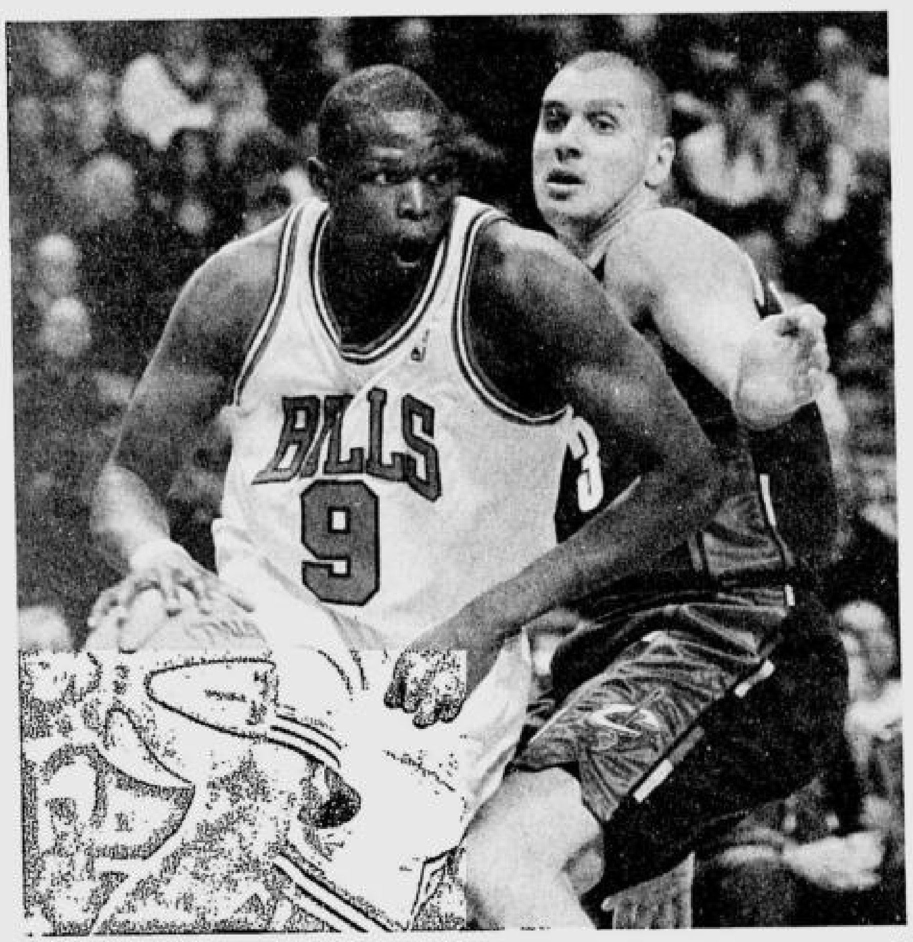
The Magic held the Heat scoreless for more than seven minutes during the second quarter before Miami broke the drought on two free throws by Earl Barron with 2:48 to play.

Wade sat out with a sprained right wrist and Jason Williams was sidelined by quadriceps fatigue.

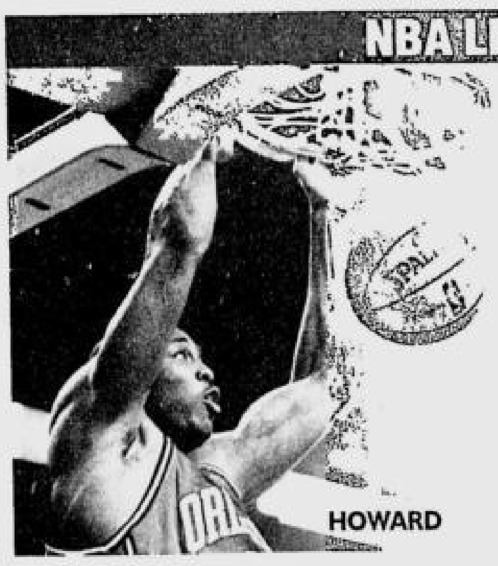
Miami's All-Star center Shaquille O'Neal is still sidelined with torn knee cartilage.

Tony Battie scored 12 points for the Magic, who held the Heat to their second-lowest output of the season. miami scored just 66 points against the Chicago Bulls on opening night. *AFP*

Orlando 97 Miami 68; Charlotte 113 Indiana 102; New Jersey 100 Minnesota 92; Milwaukee 119, Washington 102 ; Dallas 94 New Orleans 80; Memphis 110 Toronto 104; Utah 96 Portland 86; Sacramento 119 Golden State 96


CAREER-HIGH 32 points for the Bulls' Deng. AP

NBA LEADERS


HOWARD

SCORING

PLAYER	TEAM	PTS	AVG
Anthony,	Den.	696	31.6
Iverson,	Den.	583	30.7
Arenas,	Wash.	889	30.7
Bryant,	LAL	768	28.4
Redd,	Mil.	833	27.8
Wade,	Mia.	715	27.5
James,	Clev.	760	27.1
Pierce,	Bos.	638	26.6
Johnson,	Atl.	630	26.3
Yao,	Hou.	699	25.9

REBOUNDS

		TOT	AVG
Howard,	Orl.	389	12.5
Garnett,	Minn.	329	12.2
Boozer,	Utah	350	11.7
Chandler,	NOk.	305	11.3
Okafor,	Char.	326	11.2
Lee,	N.Y.	336	10.5
Randolph,	Port.	299	10.3
Wallace,	Chi.	302	10.1
Duncan,	S.A.	298	9.9
Nowitzki,	Dall.	277	9.6

ANTHONY

NASH

ASSISTS

		AST	AVG
Nash,	Phoe.	294	11.3
Kidd,	N.J.	277	9.2
Miller,	Phil.	242	9.0
Paul,	NOk.	242	9.0
Davis,	G.S.	233	8.6
Williams,	Utah	252	8.4
Billups,	Det.	228	8.1
Ford,	Tor.	244	8.1
Wade,	Mia.	204	7.8
Iverson,	Den.	145	7.6

Rockets' Wells sidelined, too

HOUSTON—THE HOUSTON ROCKets, already without injured star center Yao Ming, will be without swingman Bonzi Wells for a week with a sore lower back, the National Basketball Association team said Saturday.

It is the same injury that forced Wells to miss Friday's 94-68 victory over the Atlanta Hawks.

Since he signed a two-year, $5 million contract in the offseason, Wells has experienced an injury-plagued campaign with the Rockets. The nine-year NBA veteran missed 17 straight games earlier because of a groin injury. Wells, who averaged 13.6 points with Sacramento last season, has scored 6.8 points and 4.0 rebounds in a reserve role. *AFP*

Nadal, Nalbaldian head topnotch field

CHENNAI, INDIA—WORLD NUMBER two Rafael Nadal kickstarts his 2007 campaign at the ATP Chennai Open from Monday against the strongest field ever assembled for India's leading tennis event.

The Spaniard's main challenger at the $416,000 season opener will be world No. 8 David Nalbandian, who led Argentina into the Davis Cup final against eventual winner Russia earlier this month.

Veteran Carlos Moya, a two-time champion here, Asian star Paradorn Srichaphan of Thailand and world No. 37 Xavier Malisse of Belgium will lend further glitter to a event that features 18 top 100 players.

Three Frenchmen—the 40th-ranked Julien Benneteau, Fabrice Santoro and Nicolas Mahut—are also in the race along with newly-crowned Asian Games champion Danai Udomchoke of Thailand.

"This is going to be a tough week, a tough start to the season," said the 20-year-old Nadal, who faces former world number five Rainer Schuettler of Germany in the first round.

Nadal, looking to challenge world champion Roger Federer for the number one spot in 2007, hopes for a better start to the year after a crippling foot injury kept him out of the first six weeks of the past season.

He missed the 2006 Australian Open before winning five of his first eight tournaments including a second successive French Open title at Roland Garros.

But the gutsy left-hander failed to win another title in his last eight tournaments of the season.

NADAL: Top seed

Nalbandian, who turns 25 on Monday, hopes to recapture the form that made him world No. 3 in March and earned him the year-ending Masters title in 2005.

The Argentine, who is seeded to meet Nadal in the final, takes on Kristian Pless of Denmark in the opening round and faces a possible semi-final clash against either Moya, Paradorn or Benneteau.

Paradorn, who reached the Chennai Open final for four consecutive years from 2002-2005 and won the title in 2003, is fit again after a wrist injury forced him to withdraw from the Asian Games singles tournament in Doha. Paradorn faces a qualifier in the first round *AFP*

SPORTS

'Pencil ni Duncil,' a thanksgiving

TRULY AN MVP, Jojo Duncil (center) donates school supplies to pupils of Segundo Esguerra elementary school in Pulilan, Bulacan.

By Jasmine W. Payo

IT WAS A CHARITY SHOT HE DIDN'T WANT to miss.

University of Santo Tomas star Jojo Duncil got everything he wanted in his young basketball career—a UAAP championship crown and a Finals Most Valuable Player plum.

Showcasing his best in 2006, the 6-foot-1 swingman deserved all the good fortune that came his way. But Duncil still felt the need to share his blessings.

"I wanted to help other people even in a little way," Duncil said in Filipino.

Educational needs

After the numerous post-season celebrations, Duncil found time to hold his personal thanksgiving. With the help of Teddy Pereña of sports managing firm Team, Duncil decided to help public school students with their educational needs

"It was my first charity work," said Duncil.

Last Dec. 19, Duncil donated pencils and calendars to about 1,000 pupils of Segundo Esguerra Memorial Elementary School in Dampol, Pulilan, Bulacan.

"Their principal Jose Talucod was very happy that his school became the first beneficiary," said Pereña, who dubbed the outreach project as "Pencil ni Duncil."

The students' warm welcome also touched the 23-year-old Duncil.

"It was fun, the students were happy when we were there," he said. "Some of the students know me, some said their *kuyas* (older brother) watch me in the UAAP."

During his visit, Duncil gave a brief talk to the elementary students to emphasize the value of education.

Stay in school

"I told them there will be more opportunities if they stay in school," said Duncil, a third-year Sociology student. "I told them to study well. If they don't, they might have few choices in the future."

Although he spent only a day with the kids, the enriching experience inspired Duncil to continue the good deed.

On his birthday on Jan. 13, Duncil plans to donate more school supplies to a public school in his hometown in Apalit, Pampanga.

"I hope I can give more next time, not just pencils but also notebooks," said Duncil. "This way, we can make more kids happy."

Real Spicy flashes old fiery form

By Musong R. Castillo

REAL SPICY, RIDDEN BY A SUPER SUB, YESTERDAY RAN DOWN A CLASSY field to end the year the way he started it—with an overpowering performance.

The handsome four-year-old shot out of traffic entering the final 800 meters to rule the year-ending P3 million Philracom Classic Open championship under Louie D. Balboa in record-equalling style over Empire King.

Real Spicy matched the record for 2,050 meters despite a loose and slow Santa Ana track, clocking two minutes and 8.6 seconds with quarters of 27', 23, 25', 25 and 27 to win P1.8 million and jack up his career earnings past the P10 million mark.

The newest superhorse needed to dig deep to secure his 12th straight win of the year as Balboa applied the whip furiously in the final stretch.

Sent off as the outstanding first choice in the eight-horse field, Real Spicy won by more than six lengths over Empire King, the John B. Cordero-steered chestnut who made a move together with the eventual winner in the backstretch.

Imports Ever Mine Now and Wild Orchid set a torrid pace at the start with Balboa keeping Real Spicy in fifth spot before turning up the heat entering the final two quarters along with Empire King, a former Gold Cup winner.

"I think he (Real Spicy)will be better than Wind Blown, when his career is done," owner Hermie Esguerra told the Inquirer. "And the crowd loves him, too."

Comparisons to superhorse Wind Blown, whom Esguerra retired to stud two years ago, are now being raised. But the sportsman-businessman tends to disagree, owing to the way Real Spicy dispatched yesterday's field.

"Wind Blown defeated the great imports one at a time. And in races like that, you can strategize," Esguerra added. "Unlike in Real Spicy's case, all the best imports and locals were in this race and he beat them all."

Wind Blown, who win this race twice and practically all the big races in his career, amassed more than P19 million in prize money and was one of the most charismatic chargers ever seen on the tracks.

Longshot Glory and Honour shot out from the tail of the pack to salvage third place, another two lengths behind Empire King for P375,000 with Danseuse checking in fourth for P150,000.

SUPER HORSE Real Spicy heads for home unchallenged. HANDOUT PHOTO

HERMIE Esguerra (center), owner of Real Spicy, lifts the Philracom Classic Cup. HANDOUT PHOTO

Benson top pool shark in Pacquiao tilt

GIANT-KILLER FALCE BENSON OVERPOWered Michael Laguna, 10-4, in the finals Saturday to rule the "New Year Tournament, Handog ni Manny Pacquiao" and pocket the top prize of P70,000 at the Rock 'n Roll Billiard Café in Ermita, Manila.

Organized for the Filipino boxing hero by many-time Philippine trick shot champion Julie Guevarra and Nick Gipana, the 10-ball knockout format drew 107 players.

Pacquiao, an avid pool player himself, put up the total prize pot of P150,000.

On the way to the finals, Benson beat Kulot Sukat, Eric Calamba, Jomar Baclaran, Ruel Esquillo and JR Baclaran.

Laguna settled for the runner-up prize of P30,000. He forged the finals duel with Benson after downing Russian Petiza, Romy Del Rosario, Mike Takayama, Edgie Marilao and PJ Marikina, in that order.

Other notable pool sharks who competed in the tournament were 2006 Sydney World Junior fifth placer Renemar David, Edgar Acaba, Rolando Garcia, Israel Rota, Roberto Dy, Taroy Labrador, Johnson Vita, Benjie Guevarra, Totoy Dacer, Boy "Cotabato" Ducanes, Jarry Pelayo and Mark Mendoza.

Organizers said P1 million in total cash prizes will be at stake in the next tournament, slated in February in Gen. Santos City, Pacquiao's hometown, with the winner getting P300,000.

For inquiries, call Guevarra at 0918-3190414. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Monday, January 1, 2007

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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5	Nickelodeon				TNA Wrestling		Metro		Big News	Totoo TV		Global Shockers		Wow Maling-Mali Bytes	Sentro	Far Fetched		Araw-Araw Prem-yo Sa Resibo	Simbang Gabi
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Inocente De Ti	Nòypi, Ikaw Ba 'To?		Pangako Sa 'Yo	TV Patrol World		Kapamilya Deal Or No Deal	Super Inggo (8:15 PM)		Maging Sino Ka Man	Princess Hours		Bandila	Real Pinoy Fighter	Mirada De Mujer
AXN		I Spy				The Rundown				Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle				Mondo Magic Singapore	30 Seconds To Fame	House (Season II)		Nip/Tuck 2	
bTV		NBA Inside Stuff	NBA Action	NBA: Grizzlies @ Rockets					NBA Greatest Game Lebron scores 56pts				NBA Live	NBA Fantasy Hoops	NBA Grizzlies @ Rockets				
Cartoon Network																	Aqua Teen Hunger Force		
Cinemax		Final Run (2:50 PM)		Troy (4:15 PM)						The Heist				Vegas Vacation				Beyond Borders	
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia	World News Asia	Living Golf/ Revealed/Main Sail/Art of Life		Your World Today	
Crime/Suspense		C/S Chronicles: Cold Case Files		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		Profiler		City Confidential		Law and Order		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		Revelations		The Unit		Threshold	
Discovery Channel		Building the Ultimate II	Building The Ultimate	Beyond Tomorrow		Conspiracy Files		Deadliest Catch		Wild Discovery		Tribal Life Bunlap		Best of Discovery 2006		Tribe		Deadliest Catch	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouse works/ Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol	Lilo & Stitch	Emperor's New School/I'll Be Home For Christmas	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Suite Life Of Zack And Cody		Buzz On Maggie/ Mr. Bean The The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Sports Max 2006/07		UCA College Cheerleading & Dance, Div. I, US		X Games 11 Classic - Shaun White Yr. In Review		NFL Football						Sportscenter Asia	John Q. Hammons Hotel Classic				Sportscenter Asia
ETC	Friends	Beauty And The Geek		Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Project Runway 2		Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		America's Next Top Model 5		ET Weekend	
ETC 2nd Avenue		Starting Over		The Maury Povich Show		The Jerry Springer Show		Dr. Phil		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition	The Ellen (Degeneres) Show		Wheel Of Fortune	Jeopardy	The Biggest Loser 1		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition
Fox News		Beltway Boys	Fox News Watch	Fox Report Sunday		Bulls & Bears	Cavuto On Business	Forbes On Fox	Cashin' In	Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Makita Ka Lang Muli	Kapuso Movie Festival				Ghost Fighter	Jewel In The Palace		24 Oras	Captain Barbell	Atlantika	StarStruck: The Next Level	Bakekang	A Rosy Life (9:15 PM)		Lagot Ka, Isusumbong Kita		Saksi	
HBO				Madagascar			The Crew			Uncle Buck				Monster-In-Law				The Forgotten	
Hero TV	Mythic Warriors	Sunny Pig	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Saiyuki Reload	Naruto	Monkey Turn	Gundam Seed Destiny	Full Metal Panic	Galaxy Angels	Voltes V Evolution	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Astroboy	Three-Eyed One	Naruto	Ganbarugar	Mythic Warriors	Yu-Gi-Oh GX
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Krusada Kontra Krimen		Japan Video Topics/ Amis		Japan Video Topics/ Amis		Travel Philippines	Japan Video Topics/ Amis	EBC Earth Files	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV		Bottomline		Afterburn		Cinema Tech	Evolver	Beat The Geeks	Street Smarts	Mad TV		That 70s Show	Trigger Happy TV	Jack's Booth				The Late Show David Letterman	
Lifestyle Network	Get Color	30 Minute Meals	Sweet Dreams	Rachel Ray		Smart Solutions	Embellish This	Barefoot Contessa	Everyday Italian	Martha				Rachel Ray		Isaac		Radical Sabbatical	Genuine Article
MTV Philippines			8th & Ocean		Wildboyz	8th & Ocean	MTV Hits			Get Spotted		TRL		Wildboyz	8th & Ocean		Jams		
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXlog	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mobile MYX Top Picks		Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXlog
National Geographic	Monkey Business	Inside: Inside the Vatican		Triumph of Life: Brain Power		ShowReel Asia 3: World Cyber Games		Top 5 - Animals Like Us: Tool Use		National Geographic Specials		WOW! In the Womb: Animals Pt.1		Inside Hong Kong's Big Bang		Triumph of Life: The Survivors		ShowReel Asia 3: Kung Fu Monk	
NBN					Dinos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Teledyaryo W/ Rey Langit & Angelique Lazo		Tinig Ng Bayan (Kabinan Ng Bayan)		Dial M		Teledyaryo Final Edition		World Pool Championship					
Net 25	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	In Focus	Euromaxx	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Tamang Daan		News Beat (Live)		OpenLine Live	Kapatid Sa Hanapbuhay	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Tamang Daan		World Report	In Focus	DWTV Journal News	Euromaxx
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone/ The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	Danny Phantom	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Unfabulous				Romeo	As Told By Ginger	My Dad The Rock Star	
Qtv	Pawnshop No. 8	Samurai X	Hikaru No Go	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Winter Sonata	Irene	Emperor Of The Sea	Takeshi's Castle	H3O Hahaha...Ovet		News On Q	Sapulso		Irene	Overseas Fil Witness
RPN 9	TV Shopping	Buhay Pinoy Sa Telebisyon		TBA	Mr. Fighting	RPN Aksyon Balita		Complete Savages	Jake In Progress	Scare Tactics	GBB	Movie Monday				Newswatch Now	Go Negosyo		Kapihan
SBN 21								Sony Music Video				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Sony Music Video		Sony Music Video	
Solar Sports						WNCAA				Sagupaan						Sportsdesk			
Star Movies			Lord Of War (3:20PM)				AVP: Alien Vs. Predator				American Pie 2 (7:20 PM)			The Aviator					
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		Desire: Table For Three		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	Life With Bonnie	Everybody Loves Raymond	The King Of Queens	Becker	For Better Or For Worse		Seinfeld	Life With Bonnie
Studio 23		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXlog	Blog	Pinoy Dream Academy	Wazzup Wazzup	The Amazing Race	Lost (8:15 PM)		Alias		News Central	Rachel Ray (10:45PM)		Travel Time
UnTV				KNC Show	Kakampi Mo Ang Batas		Kalsa at Clara Kaagapay N'yo		Public Hearing	Make My Day		Ang Dating Daan (8:15PM)							

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MONDAY, JANUARY 1, 2007

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IN THIS ISSUE

- **Stocks seen rising** further in '07 /B2
- **Japanese firms turn** negative on RP /B2

DBP opens credit line for Mindanao farmers

₱500-M fund meant to encourage shift to banana production

By Doris C. Dumlao

STATE-OWNED DEVELOPMENT Bank of the Philippines has opened a P500-million credit facility for Mindanao-based farmers who are shifting to the production of bananas for export.

The credit line is expected to benefit at least 370 farmers, pave the way for the development of more than 1,100 hectares of land into banana farms and help boost the country's export earnings by about $13 million, DBP president Reynaldo David said in a press statement.

The facility seeks to improve the living conditions of farmers in southern Philippines, as well as promote banana production in the region.

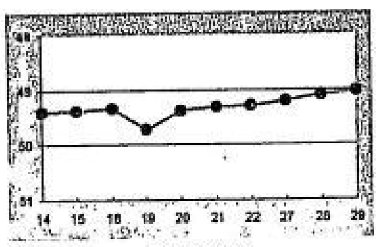
David said the facility would provide up to P1.35 million in loan per farmer-borrower without equity requirements. However, borrowers should have a viable project site not exceeding three hectares. Interested farmers will be given a customized repayment plan, with 11 months grace period on interest payments and a one-year grace on principal. They may avail themselves of the facility through any of the 60 branches of DBP's Davao-based bank, One Network Rural Bank, which is also the country's biggest rural bank.

In the meantime, DBP also signed a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Agriculture, the Cagayan State University (CSU), the provincial government of Cagayan de Oro and the local government of Lallo in Cagayan for the development of a joint forestry program

DBP/B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



DECEMBER

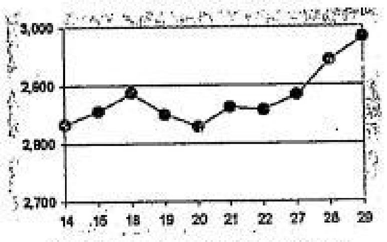
PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱49.03 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 29, 2006

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Markets closed for New Year break

FINANCIAL MARKETS ARE CLOSED TODAY for a regular holiday.

Share prices closed 1.33-percent higher last Friday for the best finish in almost 10 years due to continued bullishness over the economic prospects for 2007, dealers said.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index rose 39.16 points to close at Friday's high of 2,982.54. It earlier hit a low of 2,948.55 points.

This was its best finish since April 7, 1997 when it settled at 2,990.96. *AFP*

Exporters urged to do more business with E. Asian nations

By Ronnel W. Domingo

LOCAL EXPORTERS NEED TO DO MORE business within East Asia to take advantage of efforts toward freer trade and economic integration that would, in turn, make the region a global growth center, the Philippine Exporters Confederation said.

"The future of Philippine exports is in Asia," said Philexport president Sergio. R. Ortiz-Luis Jr. "Filipino exporters must not simply look east, they should go east."

Ortiz-Luiz said recent developments in the region, particularly East Asia, pointed to a rapid increase in intra-Asian trade and the fast integrating regional economy.

The past six years saw Philippine exports to other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Hong Kong and China grow rapidly, he said.

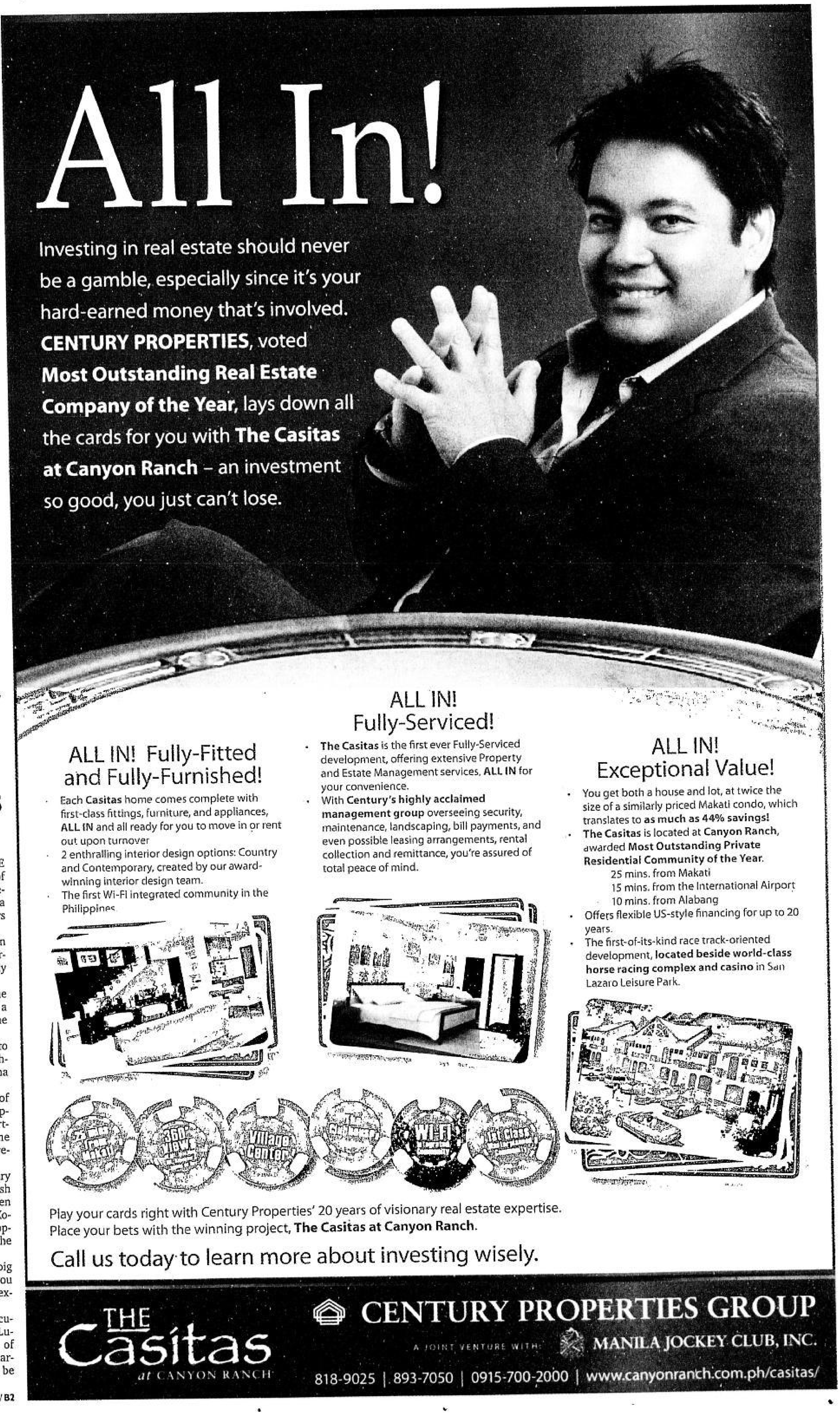
Philexport believed that the recovery of the Japanese economy as well as the wrap-up of the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement would boost Philippine exports bound for markets within the region.

"Much will be gained early in January when the Asean summit will finally push through," he said. "Ongoing talks between the Asean group and Japan, China, South Korea and India on region-wide economic cooperation are bound to be accelerated after the summit."

"It would be wise to gain foothold in big and getting prosperous markets soon if you are not yet there," Ortiz-Luis advised exporters.

He said further that if exporters, particularly those from Central and Northern Luzon, took advantage of the opening up of the fast-growing East and South Asian markets, they would be well-positioned to be the first to benefit.

EXPORTERS/B2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- With **Century's highly acclaimed management group** overseeing security, maintenance, landscaping, bill payments, and even possible leasing arrangements, rental collection and remittance, you're assured of total peace of mind.

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  - 10 mins. from Alabang
- Offers flexible US-style financing for up to 20 years.
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Stocks seen rising further in '07

Analysts cite sound fundamentals, low bank interest rates

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

FUND MANAGERS AND ANALYSTS SEE A lot of reasons to be cheerful about 2007.

Low interest rates due to the improving deficit numbers, the government's sale of key power assets and national elections that usually boosts consumer spending are seen conspiring to further boost the stock market this year.

"It's another good year for us, all things being equal," Edgar Bancod, head of research at ATR Kim Eng Securities said.

In 2006, the Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) rose 42.3 percent, with average daily turnover increasing to P2.32 billion from P1.56 billion in 2005.

This happened despite a year marked by rumored coup attempts, higher crude oil prices, super typhoons, a US interest rate hike, and political rallies against changes in the Philippine Constitution.

What investors are also looking forward to this year are a corporate earnings growth of between 15 and 20 percent, and heightened activity among banking issues due to mergers and acquisitions led by Banco de Oro and Equitable PCI Bank, Bancod said.

The sale of state power assets is also going to give power-related stocks a boost, analysts said.

Recently, the consortium of Aboitiz Power Corp and Norway's SN Power submitted the highest bid of $530 million for the state-owned 360-megawatt Magat hydropower plant, the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation (PSALM) said.

The Aboitiz group's bid topped the $420.9-million offer of First Gen Corp, according to PSALM, which is handling the sale of power generation and transmission assets of National Power Corp.

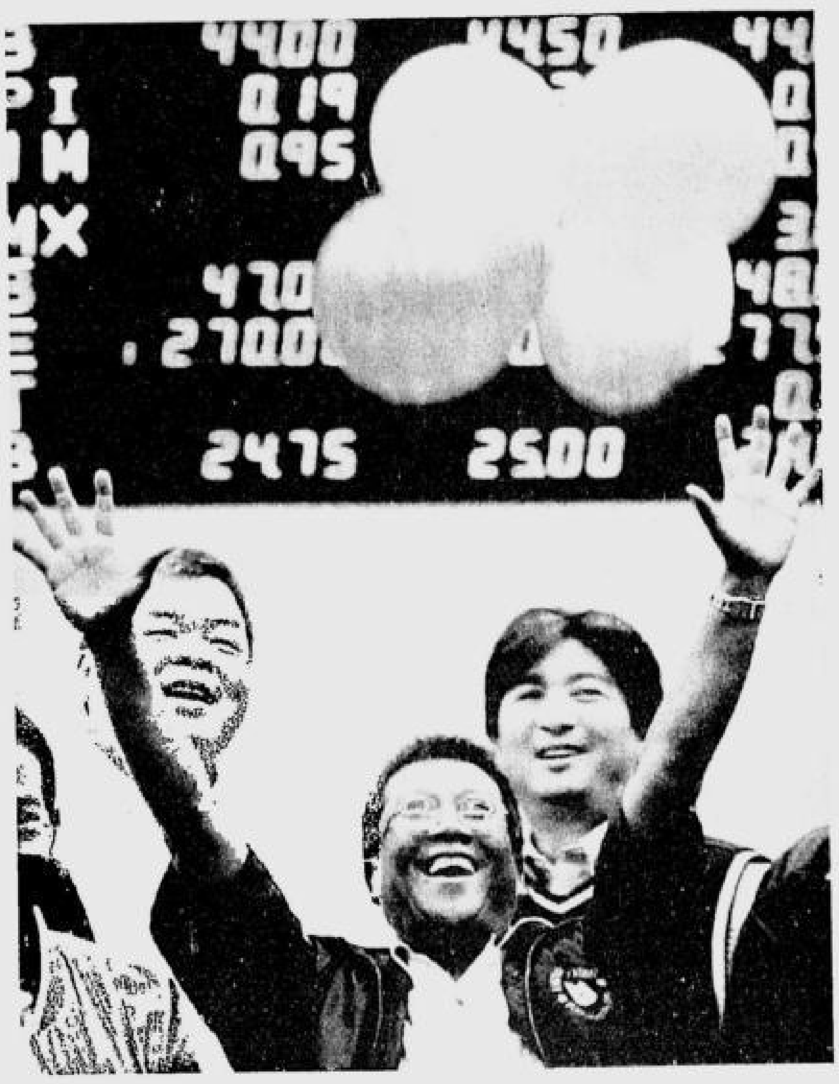
The government is re-bidding the 600 megawatt coal-fired Masinloc power plant in Zambales following the termination of its asset purchase agreement with the previous winning bidder, YNN Pacific Consortium Inc.

Allan Yu, vice president at Metrobank Trust Banking Group, said government's expected infrastructure spending this year should also bode well for construction and cement firms. He was also bullish on property stocks this year, due to the low interest rates that allow property firms to borrow funds for expansion activities.

An election year is also expected to increase spending, which is good news for consumer stocks, such as San Miguel Corp and RFM Corp.

Paul Joseph Garcia, chief investment officer at ING Investment Management Philippines Inc. and concurrently president of the Fund Managers Association of the Philippines, expect the stock index to grow by 20 percent, in line with his earnings growth forecast of 20 percent in 2007.

"We expect a 20 percent growth in corporate earnings and the market to be on track with that earnings growth to hit 3,500," Garcia said.



A TRADER plays with balloons in front of photographers to celebrate the closing of markets at the Philippines Stock Exchange on Friday. The benchmark PSE Index advanced 39.16 points or 1.3 percent, to 2,982.54, its best finish since April 7, 1997. AP

BSP expects net 'hot money' inflows in '06 to hit $2.7B

By Doris C. Dumlao

NET PORTFOLIO INVESTMENTS ARE SEEN to hit $2.7 billion in 2006, up from the previous year's $2.1 billion, as investor appetite for local stocks and government debt paper remained strong during the year given the country's improved macroeconomic fundamentals, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo said net portfolio or "hot money" inflows for the whole of 2006 likely exceeded the institution's earlier forecast of $2.1 billion by about 20 percent.

This influx of foreign portfolio investments also helped lift the peso to six-year highs, closing at 49.03 to $1 during the last trading day on Friday.

Based on reports from foreign banks, which are the major custodians of foreign funds, net portfolio inflows reached $2.53 billion from Jan. to Dec. 15, already exceeding full-year level in 2005.

"This is good because it shows sustained investor confidence (in the country)," Guinigundo said.

As of the second week of December, Guinigundo said there was at least $320 million in foreign investments generated by the initial public offering of PNOC Energy Development Corp.

"PNOC-EDC, with proceeds of around P16.7 billion, is the largest privatization effort done through the stock market since oil refiner Petron Corp. went public (in 1994)," Guinigundo said.

About 85 percent of the total portfolio inflows went to the stock market while 15 percent went to government securities, particularly fixed-rate treasury notes or FXTNs.

The strong portfolio investments inflows, along with remittances from overseas Filipino workers, had helped the BSP accumulate more dollars and build up the gross international reserves (GIR) and balance of payments (BOP) surpluses.

The GIR is an indicator of a country's ability to service the foreign exchange requirements of the economy, consisting of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, foreign investments and special drawing rights from the International Monetary Fund.

The BOP, on the other hand, measures the foreign exchange transactions between the domestic economy and the rest of the world.

600MW in new power capacity eyed

By Abigail L. Ho

VARIOUS INVESTORS HAVE expressed interest in putting up at least 600 megawatts (MW) in additional power generating capacity this year, said Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla.

Programs include expansion of existing power generation facilities as well as greenfield or new projects, he said, adding that much of the new capacity would be placed in the power-hungry Mindanao grid.

"We're looking at some uprating projects in Mindanao. For some of these projects, (such as the one involving the Agus hydropower complex), we hope we'll be able to settle the land issues," he said in a briefing.

He said the existing Agus power facilities should be improved, while the yet-to-be-constructed Agus 3 facility should soon be added to the hydropower complex.

Lotilla declined to name the investors who would be investing in new capacity, as well as where the new capacity would be put up.

Asked whether the winning bidder for Atlanta-based Mirant Corp.'s Philippine assets, the joint venture between Marubeni Corp. and Tokyo Electric Power Co., would be further expanding the existing Mirant plants here, he said it was "possible."

Japanese companies turn negative on RP

By Ronnel W. Domingo

JAPANESE FIRMS' CONFIDENCE in the Philippines swung back to negative after just two months of favorable rating even as companies felt more bullish about Southeast Asia in December.

According to a monthly survey of the Japan External Trade Organization, Japanese firms operating in the country gave a negative 0.5 rating in last month's poll following a two-month recovery from a 17-month stint below zero.

Still, the survey showed that confidence would fluctuate to a positive 1.5 rating in the next two to three months.

Jetro's monthly diffusion index survey showed that business sentiment for the country was weakened while ratings for Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia—while further down the negative side—improved.

Thailand's rating climbed to -16.9 from -20; Malaysia's to -5 from -10.1, and Indonesia's to -7.6 from 19.3.

Like the Philippines, regional leader Singapore's rating slid, but still farther up the ladder at 13.8 from 15.4.

The ratings measure year-on-year changes in business outlooks for the current month and the following two or three months.

Ratings are expressed as diffusion indices, which show the difference between positive and negative responses.

Since Jetro started the poll in June 2001, Philippine ratings had bottomed at negative 40.9 in December of that year and peaked at 22.9 in September 2004 before dipping to current ratings.

Jetro explained that the aim of the survey was to provide up-to-date information on business conditions in the Asian economy to help companies develop more effective business strategies.

Firms were asked to compare earnings prospects, supply and demand, inventory, sales prices and accounts receivable with the same period a year earlier.

Philippine-based respondents in the August survey included 196 firms engaged in businesses involving oil, chemicals, steel, metals, electric and electronic machinery, transportation machinery and other manufacturing concerns as well as construction, real estate, transport, communication, commerce, services and other nonmanufacturing activities.

CURRENCIES

December 31, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.760514	1.000000	49.1320
Japan	Yen	0.006394	0.008408	0.4131
United Kingdom	Pound	1.493041	1.963200	96.4559
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.097855	0.128669	6.3218
Switzerland	Franc	0.622505	0.818532	40.2161
Canada	Dollar	0.655446	0.861846	42.3442
Singapore	Dollar	0.495675	0.651763	32.0224
Australia	Dollar	0.599113	0.787774	38.7049
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.017386	2.652661	130.3305
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.202804	0.266667	13.1019
Brunei	Dollar	0.494065	0.649646	31.9184
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000111	0.0055
Thailand	Baht	0.021226	0.027910	1.3713
UAE	Dirham	0.207078	0.272287	13.3780
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.314900	64.6037
Korea	Won	0.000818	0.001076	0.0529
China	Yuan**	0.097326	0.127974	6.2876
Argentina	Peso	0.247725	0.325733	16.0039
Brazil	Real	0.355597	0.467574	22.9728
Denmark	Kroner	0.134132	0.176370	8.6654
India	Rupee	0.017229	0.022655	1.1131
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.215382	0.283206	13.9145
Mexico	New Peso	0.070074	0.092140	4.5270
New Zealand	Dollar	0.536102	0.704920	34.6341
Norway	Kroner	0.121135	0.159281	7.8258
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012484	0.016415	0.8065
South Africa	Rand	0.108281	0.142379	6.9954
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023292	0.030626	1.5047

Source: REUTERS' FOREX CLOSING PRICES as of NY Time- Dec. 28, 2006
* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen. ** Asian Time Closing Rate as of Dec. 28, 2006

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 29, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	7.3	7.4	7.3	7.4	31,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	46.5	46.5	46	46	235,600
Bank of the Phil. Islands	63	63.5	63	63.5	561,700
China Banking Corp.	690	690	680	680	32,590
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	600
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.48	0.48	0.47	0.47	4,130,000
Equitable Pci Bank Inc.	83	84	81.5	83	93,400
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	51.5	51.5	51	51.5	674,700
Philippine National Bank	44	44.5	44	44	79,600
Phil. Savings Bank	48	48	48	48	2,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	24.75	24.75	24	24	116,200
Security Bank Corp.	65.5	65.5	65	65.5	70,200
Union Bank of the Phil.	49	50	49	49	12,100
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Atr Kimeng Fin. Corp.	1.96	2.08	1.96	2.08	281,000
Bankard Inc.	0.78	0.8	0.78	0.8	1,000,000
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	5.4	5.6	5.3	5.6	450,000
First Abacus Financial	0.74	0.8	0.7	0.79	1,230,000
First Metro Invest. Corp	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	10,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1650	1650	1650	1650	10
Pci Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	400,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	280	280	280	280	500
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2040	2045	2040	2045	690
Ivantage Corp.	1.68	1.68	1.64	1.66	7,323,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
Pnoc Energy Dev. Corp.	4.8	4.95	4.8	4.85	235,243,000
First Gen Corp.	56	56.5	56	56.5	981,300
First Phil Hldgs Corp	63.5	63.5	63	63	270,700
Manila Electric Co. A	54.5	54.5	53.5	54	188,800
Manila Electric Co. B	55	56	54.5	55	493,700
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.6	9.6	9.4	9.4	4,645,000
Petron Corp.	4.1	4.1	4.05	4.1	1,819,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.29	660,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.12	1.14	1.12	1.14	726,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	27,000
Cadp Group Corp.	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	40,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	20.25	21	20.25	21	32,200
Jollibee Foods Corp.	42.5	42.5	41	42	895,100
Pancake House Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.2	6.3	12,000
Rfm Corp.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	130,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.75	2.75	2.7	2.7	95,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	40,000
San Miguel Corp. A	66.5	67.5	66.5	67.5	124,000
San Miguel Corp. B	74.5	77.5	74.5	77.5	385,800
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.12	2.14	2.1	2.1	476,000
Universal Robina Corp.	19.25	19.25	19	19.25	969,400
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1	1.02	0.99	0.99	8,130,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	391,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	6,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.8	7.8	7.7	7.8	1,466,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	6.5	6.5	6.3	6.3	32,000
Republic Cement Corp.	3.95	3.95	3.95	3.95	123,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc	5.4	5.4	5.3	5.4	7,719,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.6	0.64	0.6	0.64	100,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.71	0.73	0.7	0.71	16,750,000
Macondray Plastics Inc.	2.5	3	2.5	3	5,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.2	0.205	0.195	0.2	9,760,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.0085	0.008	0.008	19,000,000
Ayala Corp.	580	590	575	590	241,950
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.64	0.66	0.64	0.65	350,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	7	7.1	7	7	316,000
Alliance Global Group Inc	8.4	8.5	8.4	8.5	49,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	3,300,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.85	2.85	2.8	2.85	230,000
Apc Group Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.36	0.37	2,270,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	28,500,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.14	1.16	1.12	1.12	1,920,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp	3.15	3.3	3.1	3.1	77,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	8,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.4	9.7	9.4	9.7	5,243,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	2.22	2.22	2.14	2.16	9,788,000
Dmci Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.1	6	6.1	1,557,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.6	3.65	3.6	3.65	2,344,000
F&J Prince Holdings Corp.	1	1	0.9	1	80,000
F&J Prince Hldgs. B	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	10,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.25	0.27	0.25	0.26	2,280,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	381,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc	10.5	11	10.5	11	1,824,800
Medco Holdings	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	1,600,000
Magnum Holdings Inc	3.85	3.85	3.6	3.6	128,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.58	1.62	1.54	1.54	653,000
Pacifica	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	10,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	100,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	20,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.7	49,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	1,100,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.155	0.16	0.155	0.16	430,000
Sm Investments Corp.	330	330	320	325	33,600
South China Resources Inc	0.98	0.98	0.97	0.97	100,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.31	0.31	0.29	0.29	4,970,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.12	0.135	0.12	0.13	170,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	15.5	15.5	15	15.25	3,454,600
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	130,000
Belle Corp.	1.14	1.14	1.12	1.12	7,917,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.58	1.64	1.56	1.58	1,088,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.42	0.43	0.42	0.42	5,950,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.2	94,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	60,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	20,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	1,500,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.54	0.55	0.53	0.54	18,560,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	310,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	1,100,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	2.14	2.16	2.1	2.14	25,215,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.5	42,000
Interport Res.	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	8,000,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	10,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	1,860,000
City & Land Developers	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.6	28,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.63	0.64	0.63	0.64	2,060,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.016	0.016	0.015	0.015	2,500,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.38	2.42	2.36	2.42	57,162,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	4.8	5	4.7	5	373,000
Mrc Allied Ind. Inc.	0.38	0.39	0.37	0.38	1,010,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.15	0.16	0.15	0.16	440,000
Polar Property Holdings	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	8,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	16	16.25	15.75	16.25	2,069,200
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.66	0.67	0.65	0.66	2,660,000
Sm Development Corp.	2.7	2.7	2.65	2.65	1,556,000
Sm Prime Holdings Inc.	11.25	11.25	10.5	10.75	3,690,200
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.56	0.59	0.56	0.59	150,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.11	0.11	0.105	0.105	2,910,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp	20.5	20.5	20.25	20.25	25,800
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	50,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	1.94	1.96	1.9	1.96	11,264,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1240	1245	1235	1235	31,680
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.7	6.9	6.6	6.9	7,399,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2460	2570	2460	2550	159,220
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.195	0.195	0.19	0.19	10,800,000
Imperial Res.	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	34,000,000
Ionics Inc.	2.18	2.18	2.16	2.16	425,000
Ipvg Corp.	3.8	3.85	3.7	3.85	626,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	3,400,000
Ism Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	100,000
Transpacific Broadband	1.8	2	1.8	1.88	1,939,000
Philweb Corp.	0.031	0.031	0.031	0.031	22,400,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4	4.1	4	4.1	112,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	20.25	20.75	20.25	20.75	340,700
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	150,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Grand Plaza Hotel Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.75	18.75	200
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.98	1.98	1.9	1.9	3,485,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.58	0.6	0.58	0.6	3,400,000
EDUCATION					
Centro Escolar University	9.3	9.4	9.1	9.3	308,000
Far Eastern University	810	810	810	810	10
Ipeople Inc	3.05	3.1	3.05	3.1	150,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.12	2.14	2.08	2.1	185,000
Paxys Inc	19.75	19.75	19.5	19.75	1,288,700
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc	40	50	40	50	7,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc A	6	6.1	6	6	683,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc B	6.2	6.2	6	6	175,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	47,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	9.9	9.9	9.7	9.7	2,158,000
Benguet Corp. A	9.5	9.5	9.3	9.3	75,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	3	3	2.9	3	91,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	12,370,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.27	5,530,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.024	0.024	0.023	0.024	501,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.027	0.027	0.026	0.026	345,700,000
Omico Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.013	795,800,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4.05	4.15	4.05	4.05	7,721,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	18.5	18.5	18.25	18.25	163,900
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.73	0.73	0.71	0.72	770,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.46	1.46	1.38	1.4	4,508,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.28	9,030,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.011	19,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	362,400,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	1.04	1.04	1.02	1.04	1,140,000
Pnoc Exploration Corp.-B	24	24	23	23	900
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	9.8	9.9	9.8	9.8	186,000

DBP opens credit line for Mindanao farmers

From page B1

into a model agribusiness project showcasing modern agri-fisheries technology.

David said the project would convert a 182-hectare forest area in Lal-lo, Cagayan, into a model farm facility that would promote the conservation of natural resources and sustainable crop production practices.

The project is expected to generate at least 350 new jobs and benefit 172 new households in the area. It is also seen to promote multi-line processing and marketing facilities, and improve farm-to-market roads linking four barangays in Lal-lo, Cagayan.

The DBP-CSU Forest project was launched last year. It started with 151 hectares of mixed plantation and was later expanded to 182 hectares.

Exporters urged . . .

From page B1

Central and Northern Luzon are closest to these markets through the international seaports of Subic in Olongapo and Poro Point in San Fernando City, La Union, as well as the international ports of Laoag and Clark.

Philexport earlier projected that total export earnings in 2006 would exceed the growth forecast of 10 percent although the stronger peso and the expected softening in major markets worldwide would mean slower growth in 2007.

As of end-October, total exports reached $39.35 billion. For the whole year, the target was set at between $47 billion and $48 billion, which translates to an overall export growth of between 13 percent and 15 percent.

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PLAYERS can sing along with Fall Out Boy's "Dance, Dance" and 29 other hits in "Singstar Rocks!" for the PlayStation 2. (AP PHOTO/SONY)

Rockin' in the new year with musical games

WASHINGTON—IT'S NEW Year's Eve. The champagne's been uncorked, and everyone has sung "Auld Lang Syne," whether they know the words or not. Isn't it time to jazz up the party with some livelier music? And whether you're a singer, a guitarist or a dancer, there's a video game to suit your talents.

One of the best party games this year is RedOctane's "Guitar Hero II," which lets two people at a time indulge in some serious shredding. We've already reviewed it (it's awesome), so here are a few more musical games to wake up your New Year's bash.

"SingStar Rocks!" (Sony, for the PlayStation 2, $49.99): In Europe, the "SingStar" series has been attracting karaoke fans for a few years now. "SingStar Rocks!" is the franchise's US debut, and it's strong competition for Konami's popular "Karaoke Revolution."

It's simple enough for any partygoer to understand: Pick up the microphone, pick a video and start singing along with the pros. Your score is based on how closely you match the timing and pitch of the original; you can actually sing an octave lower or higher and still rack up points.

Since the package includes two microphones (which plug directly into the PS2), you can sing duets or go head-to-head against another singer, and a "pass-the-mic" challenge lets up to eight people play.

The 30 tunes, ranging from karaoke favorites like Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive" to recent rock hits like the Killers' "Somebody Told Me," are more than enough for most parties, but real karaoke junkies will be howling for more. Two stars out of four.

"Elite Beat Agents" (Nintendo, for the DS, $34.99): The hippest heroes to hit video games in a long time are the Elite Beat Agents, three funky dudes who solve global crises through dancing.

When a harried baby sitter needs a break, they step in to the tune of Steriogram's "Walkie Talkie Man." They rescue a couple of shipwrecked debutantes to the beat of Madonna's "Material Girl." They help a sailor find sunken treasure with a rendition of the Village People's "Y.M.C.A." (Why not "In the Navy"?)

All the tunes are cover versions, incidentally, but they're all toe-tappers with the sort of uptempo beats that make for a good rhythm game.

The object is to tap or slide your stylus on the DS screen in time with the music; hit most of the beats and the agents will save the day.

Most of the missions require some practice before you can win, but you'll probably want to watch the scenarios again even after you beat them, thanks to their vibrant, often hilarious comic-book style. Three and a half stars.

"Gitaroo Man Lives!" (Koei, for the PlayStation Portable, $39.99): The reluctant hero of this game is a kid named U-1, who turns into Gitaroo Man after his talking dog hands him a magical instrument.

The kid has to use his guitar skills to fight alien invaders, like a bee-suit-wearing trumpet player and a turntable-scratching robot. You can outduel them by tapping the PSP's buttons as they are displayed on-screen, although to play really tasty licks you need to hold down a button while moving the directional pad different ways.

Sounds simple, but it takes a lot of coordination to time your riffs just right. The hyperkinetic visuals will remind some players of the 1996 classic "Parappa the Rapper," while the music—all recorded especially for the game—evokes a good variety of genres, from disco to jazz to classical. Two stars. *AP*

Credit, loyalty cards' guard arrives in RP

By Riza T. Olchondra

A CARD DEVELOPED IN JAPAN that prevents data capture from credit cards and shoppers' loyalty cards is now in the Philippines.

The anti-skimming card, is now being tested in the Philippines by Mai's World Trading Ltd. Corp. owner Jennette Nishioka from Osaka, Japan.

"Skimming is the unauthorized reading of RFID tags without authorization, leading to identity theft. This allows unauthorized persons to acquire personal and financial information of another person. Fraudsters can build cloned cards which they can use in automated teller machines to steal from accounts," Nishioka explained in an interview.

An RFID tag is a microchip that contains information such as a customers' account number and PIN. RFID tags come in many forms, such as smart labels, barcodes, and embedded chips found in the E-Pass card, most debit and credit cards, loyalty cards, cash cards, and some ATM cards.

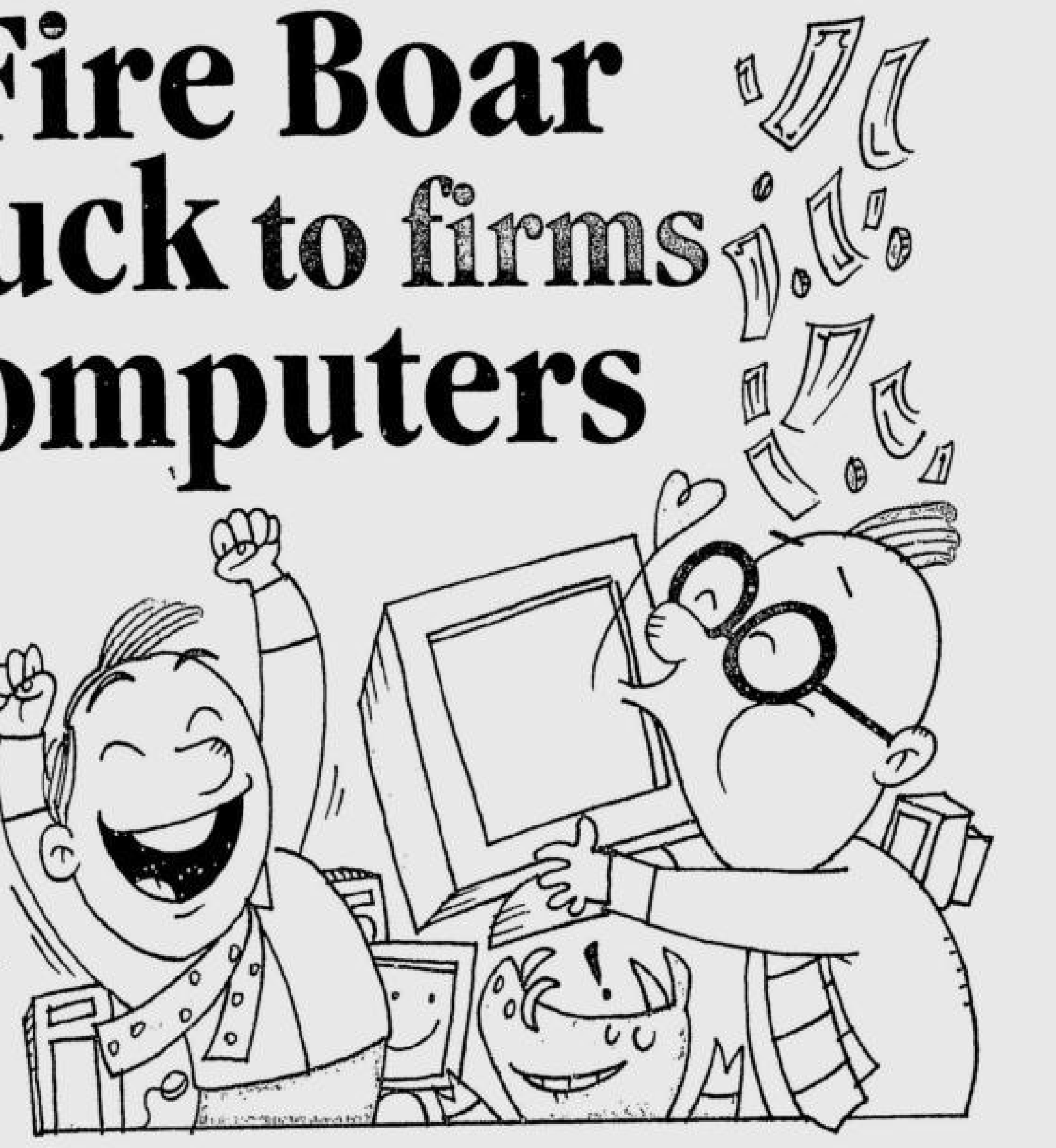
Nishioka said it has been observed abroad that a person with an RFID tag reader could move through crowds silently "skimming" cards.

"Skimming is now a major concern in more developed economies but this does not mean it cannot happen in the Philippines," she said.

Nishioka said the anti-skimming card has been approved for use against identity theft by the Osaka government. She said her company was now coordinating with Philippine authorities in testing the card locally prior to distribution.

"An anti-skimming card can be placed in wallets and purses to prevent data capture," Nishioka said. "It is an easy preventive measure and we will make sure it is affordable for consumers."

Year of Fire Boar brings luck to firms with computers



By Abigail L. Ho

IN THIS TECHNOLOGICALLY advanced age, it seems that there isn't much room for luck. But geeks sometimes do deviate from science.

This is why individuals and companies engaged in businesses that have something to do with computers may have a reason to smile in the year of the fire boar, as computer-related businesses are some of the luckier businesses in 2007.

According to Marites Allen, certified feng shui expert and president of World of Feng Shui Inc., the year of the fire boar is very positive for those engaged in the metal and earth industries.

Computers, being classified as part of the metal industry, had a great potential of generating wealth for owners of businesses related to them.

"There are a lot of interesting element combinations this year, so there's great potential to harness the prosperity luck," she said.

Computer-related businesses could involve the manufacture of computer components, as well as businesses that predominantly involved the use of such machines.

Allen noted that despite today's technologically advanced age, there was always room for luck, especially one as "scientific" as feng shui.

"Feng shui is not superstition, not religion, not magic. We do a lot of research and it's based on scientific calculations," she said.

Information technology businesses and IT-enabled services, all businesses that predominantly used metal and specifically computers in their operations, have been the country's sunshine industries these past years.

As of November 2006, more than 25 percent, or 106 of the 411 projects approved by the Philippine Economic Zone Authority, were IT-related, generating P8.73 billion worth of investments.

Gadgets seen as best way to tell lies

LONDON—MORE THAN FOUR OF five people admit to telling little white lies at least once a day and the preferred way of being "economical with the truth" is to use technology such as mobiles, texts and e-mails, a survey on Thursday said.

The research by pollsters 72 Point found that "techno-treachery" was widespread with nearly 75 percent of people saying gadgets like Blackberrys made it easier to fib.

Just over half of respondents said using gadgets made them feel less guilty when telling a lie than doing it face to face, the study on behalf of Friends Provident found.

The workplace was a favorite location for fibbing with 67 percent of the 1,487 respondents admitting they had lied at work.

The top lie was pretending to be ill (43 percent) followed by saying work had been completed when it hadn't (23 percent).

Worryingly for bosses, 18 percent said they lied to hide a big mistake.

But, employers were not the only ones on the receiving end of disingenuous statements.

Just over 40 percent said they had lied to their family or partner. Key topics to lie about were; buying new clothes or the cost of them (37 percent), how good someone looked in something (35 percent) how much they had eaten (35 percent) and drunk (31 percent) and how much they weighed (32 percent).

The survey found that while people were dishonest, most told lies with the best intentions and to spare others' feelings.

But with hi-tech gadgets on the top of many Christmas lists this year maybe everyone should cynically brace themselves for a few fibs in the New Year. *REUTERS*

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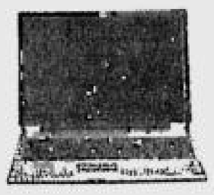

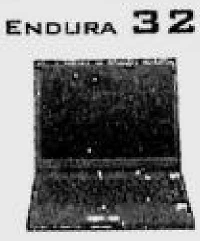

UPS Foundation awards P1.8-million grant to Gilas

UPS PHILIPPINES ANNOUNCED A P1.8-million or $35,000 grant to one of the Ayala Foundation's projects—Gilas or Gearing-up Internet Literacy and Access for Students.

UPS's involvement in another charitable initiative was possible with the grant which was made through the auspices of the UPS Foundation, the charitable arm of UPS.

"UPS and its employees' are committed to reach out to the less fortunate members of the community," said Pirojshaw Sarkari, managing director of UPS Philippines at the Gilas Grant Award Ceremony. "Our chair and CEO, Mike Eskew said, 'When the values and principles of communities and corporations are in lockstep, incredible things can happen.'"

The UPS grant will be used to fund hardware and software installation, and improve Internet connectivity in at least 18 public high schools in Pampanga, Muntinlupa, Cebu City, and Pasay City, where UPS offices are located. The close proximity also allows UPS employees to volunteer their time and talents to provide computer training for the teachers and students.

The grant is regarded as a significant step towards bridging the widening digital divide in the Philippines. According to Gilas, only about six percent of Philippine public high schools have facilities that give students training and access to the Internet. As of December 2004, only 2,096 or 38.5 percent of the country's 5,443 public schools were wired to the Internet.

Gilas envisions that the program will allow 5,789 public high school students to gain access to computer laboratories with Internet capabilities for computer literacy classes, research, and interactive learning programs. There are plans in the pipeline and they include introducing a basic curriculum and a one-year lesson plan to ensure the optimal use of the computer facilities by the students.

Since its inception, the UPS Foundation has consistently acted on its three main areas of focus: promoting volunteerism, combating hunger and illiteracy. Last year, the foundation awarded grants amounting to P9.5 million or US$175,000 to help those in need. The recipients include the Boy Scouts of the Philippines, AWECA Foundation, Baguio Center for Young Adults, PREP Inc, Batang Munti Foundation and Rotary Club of Quezon City.

BPI FAMILY SAVINGS BANK HOSTS BROKER'S QUARTERLY BONUS

BPI Family Savings Bank values its partnership with its pool of accredited brokers who refer housing loans to the bank. It offers a superior Rewards package, known as the 'Amazing Treats' program to performing brokers. For every successful housing loan referral, brokers enjoy cash incentives and gift checks which can be redeemed at various merchants to purchase groceries, medicines, load gasoline, buy clothes, equipment, computers, gadgets, furniture and appliances. BPI Family Savings Bank held recently the much awaited Third Quarterly Bonus Raffle Draw. BPI Family Savings Bank president Alfonso Salcedo Jr. welcomed the 56 selected guests present. Brokers who gave successful housing loan referrals for the third quarter of 2006 were given an invitation to an exclusive get-together at the Verve Restaurant, along Dela Rosa street Makati, which is the new meeting place in town. Gift checks, hotel overnight stays and free trips to popular local destinations plus a trip to HongKong Disneyland were given away. The fifth and fourth prize winners were Rolito Bandarlipe and Letibeth Dy. The third prize winner was Arnel Cruzado. The second prize went to Ma. Joylinne Tan. And Ma. Teresa Trespalacioreal was the lucky broker who won the first prize. In addition to the raffle draw, the highest referrer in terms of loan value was awarded a guaranteed prize equivalent to the first prize. The awardee was no less than top broker Patricia Sardalla. Housing Loan account officer Chito Yacapin hosted the event. Entertainment was provided by the known international comedian Rex Navarette. After an afternoon of fun and excitement, guests enjoyed a sumptuous merienda cena. Photo shows (from left): Jocelyn Sta. Ana, VP retail mortgage division, top broker Patricia Sardalla, BPI Family Savings Bank president Alfonso Salcedo Jr. and BPI SVP Nita Claravall

Adam's Car Care: the expert cleaner

ONE OF AMERICA'S OLDEST AND MOST trusted brands in car care is now in the Philippines. Adam's Premium Car Care Products line is the preferred choice of American auto detailers, car collectors, car clubs and Hollywood celebrities. What started out as a backyard industry several decades ago has evolved into the ultimate choice when it comes to auto detailing.

Adam's experience and extensive research and development have enabled it to provide the efficiency of achieving the deepest and richest shine possible. The scientifically mixed polish and waxes are easy to apply and remove; and is guaranteed not to leave a chalky white mark on your cars' plastic and rubber trims. Each Adam's product is carefully formulated with special blends of high quality polymers, acrylics and waxes. "The most important thing is that Adam's can outgloss anything on the market," says Manolet Santos of Ansan International Ventures Inc, the official distributor of Adam's car care products in the Philippines.

Adam's Premium Car Care signature line includes dressings, cleaners, sealants and polishes that are all guaranteed to outlast and outshine any product that you have used down the years, just ask Jay Leno and Nicholas Cage about Adam's. For information on how to take care of that investment, call 894-2920 for details or e mail Adam's at ansan@pldtdsl.net for further information.

Jose Mari Chan, Filipino pianist at Meralco Theater Jan. 5

NOTED FILIPINO POP SINGER and composer Jose Mari Chan and US-based Filipino pianist Lakambini Zaguirre Ramos along with choirmaster Maria Teresa Vizconde Roldan will lead the Filipino artists in the special fundraising concert on Friday, Jan. 5, 2007 at the Meralco Theater.

Called "Sacred Space, A Gift of Grace," the concert will raise funds for the ministry of the Regina Rosarii Contemplative Association and the Dominican Sisters of the Regina Rosarii which spearheads the Tuesday Feed (Food, Education, Empowerment, Delivery of medical and social services) Program for street families living in pushcarts and the broadcast ministry, Sacred Space on the air over Radio Veritas, 846.

Aside from Chan, the concert will also highlight the special homecoming concert of Filipina pianist Lakambini Zaguirre Ramos, a former first prize winner of the National Music Competition for Young Artists. Under the tutelage of the late distinguished piano pedagogue Benjamin Tupas. Ramos was given the Cardinal Spellman Scholarship which enabled her to attend the Pope Pius XII Institute in Florence, Italy, where she earned her Master's Degree in Music with Wilhelm Gillert. She took post graduate courses at the Accademia Chigiana in Sienna, Italy, and at Juilliard and Teacher's College in New York, and studied with Martin Canin. She is also a prizewinner in the Tschaikowsky competition in Manila and won two silver medals in the 1984 International Annual Piano Recording Competition sponsored by the American College of Musicians, National Piano Guild of Piano Teachers in the United States. She has given lecture-recitals in the Philippines, Australia, San Francisco, New York and Rhode Island and Westchester. She recently came from a successful concert in Vancouver, Canada and in Poughkeepsie, New York.

The Jan. 5 piano repertoire include Chopin's Polonaise In A Flat Major, Op. Polonaise In A Flat Major, Op. 53 Mendelssohn's Rondo Capriccioso Op.14 , Liszt's Un Sospiro (Etude In D Flat) , Brahms' Hungarian Dance, Chopin's Fantaisie Impromptu In C # Minor, Op. 66 and Streauss's Concert Arabesque ("By the Beautiful Blue Danube) in the first part of the concert.

Apart from the special participation of Jose Mari Chan, the concert will wind up with favorite Filipino pieces like Santiago's Souvenir de Filipinas, Variation on the Folksong and Bahay Kubo, Manalo's Rupikal ng Kapiz, Ribaya's Habanera Filipina, Kasilag's Theme and Variations of the Folksong (Walay Angay), De Leon's Igorot Dance and Buencamino's Ang Larawan.

The Jan. 5 fundraising concert is sponsored by Meralco, Tamayo's Catering Services, The Flower Farm, Lipton, Total Solutions Inc, Pepsi, Richel Mascarinas Digital Photography, CCJ Ventures Inc and Nutri-Licious. The concert media partners include the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Business Mirror, Graphic, 105.1 FM Crossover Radio and 97.9 Home Radio Manila.

For ticket inquiries, please call tel. nos. 372-5327 or 0919-2694286, call Lucy, 0917-8503474 or Miriam 0920-3112727.

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Based on an original design for the US military, QuietComfort headphones is an effective gadget whenever noise is a problem: on buses or trains, in the office, even at home. Bose engineers enhanced the convenience and portability features of the QuietComfort 2 headphones to make them even easier to enjoy in a variety of environments.

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To experience the absolute in noise canceling technology call Eleksis Marketing at 724-9566/898-2048 or visit Bose showrooms at the R3 Level of the Power Plant Mall, 3rd level of the SM Megamall and the 3rd floor of Robinsons Place, Manila.

"In Christ all shall be made alive..." ***Corinthians 15:22***

COL. NORBERTO B. BLANCO (Ret.)

Philippine Army
(World War II & Korean War Veteran)

Died peacefuly in the grace of our Lord on December 31, 2006 at the age of 88.

His bereaved wife **Ramona**; children **Julius, Rommel & Carole, Josephine & Eugene, Nelson & Cleofe**; grandchildren **Camille, Eric, Nicole, Cathleen, Julienne, Andrea & Adrian**; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul

His remains lie in state at Christ the King – Greenmeadows, Quezon City.

Interment to be announced later.

**I am
the way,
the truth
and
the life.
No one
comes
to the
Father
except
through
Me.
John 14:6**

"I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing." ***Genesis 12:2***

Jesus V. Garilao

Peacefully joined our Lord on December 31, 2006 at the age of 91.

He has been reunited with his loving wife **Lourdes**, daughters **Delise** and **Jesusa** and brother **Patrocinio.** He is survived by his brother **Ramiro** and sisters **Rogelia**, **Bella** and **Laura**. His children **Amy**, **Ernesto** and **Pilar** and son-in-law **Net**, together with their children and grandchildren give thanks to the Lord for the blessing of his life.

His remains lie in state at the Chapel of the Resurrection, Our Lady of Beautiful Love Parish, Merville Park, Parañaque City.

Interment will be on January 2, 2007, at the Manila Memorial Park, following the 9:00 a.m. Mass at Our Lady of Beautiful Love.

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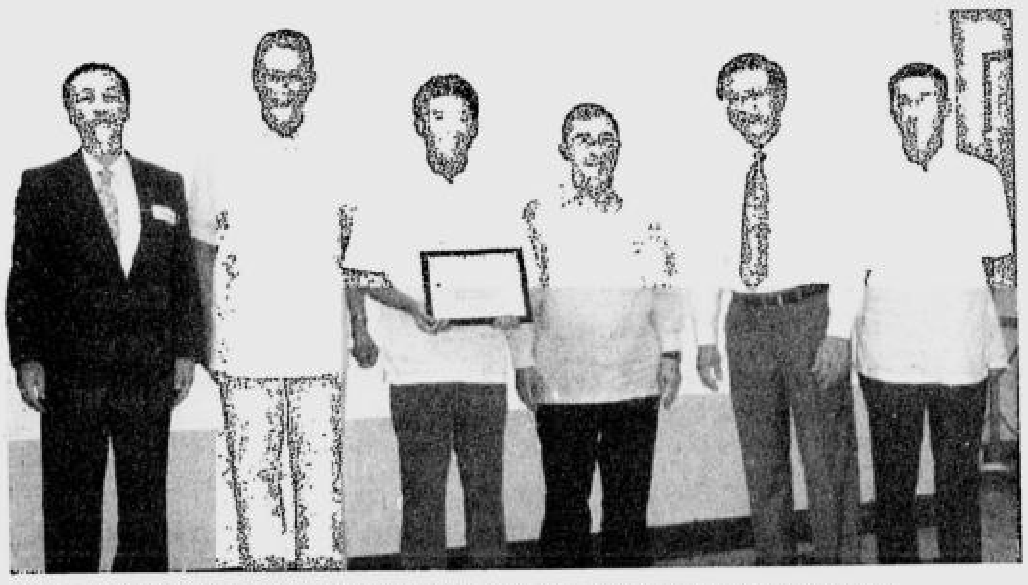

MR. RAPHAEL T. JUAN, PRESIDENT OF CENTRO MANUFACTURING CORP. (3rd from left), receives the company's Certificate of Completion for the JODC-sponsored Process Kaizen Program from (L to R): Tetsuro Kobayashi, Senior Managing Director of the JODC, DTI Senior Usec. Tomas Aquino, MVPMAP Chairman Feliciano Torres, Ford Motor Phils. President Henry Co and TPS expert Yoshinori Fujii.

CENTRO MANUFACTURING CORPORATION (Centro), the country's first and only ISO-certified truck body manufacturer today, recently completed the third phase of the Process Kaizen Program sponsored by the Japan Overseas Development Corporation (JODC) and the Center for Automotive Technology Corporation (CATC).

The six-month program, offered to selected members of the Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturers Association of the Phils. (MVPMAP), was handled by Mr. Yoshinori Fujii, an expert on kaizen (continuous improvement) and Total Production Systems (TPS).

Centro Pres. Raphael T. Juan says that "Centro's completion of the third phase of the program signifies the company's pursuit for continuing improvement and product quality. The Process Kaizen Program complemented the ISO 9001-2000 certification we received from TUV America in 2003 and was a big help to us in successfully completing the recent big fleet accounts given to us like the PLDT utility vans and the PNP patrol vehicles".

Centro, first established in 1997, is today one of the country's leading truck body manufacturer and is known for its high-quality passenger, patrol, closed van and telecom utility van bodies. Mr. Juan adds that "our plant has its own integrated stamping plant, thus we have full control of the delivery and quality of each and every component that goes into our products. That is one advantage we have over other truck body builders. And we apply all the lessons that our staff have learned from the Process Kaizen Program".

---

*On the 28th of December
our beloved*

CRISTINA, HOWELL CHRISTIAN & HUGH CONROY O. YAO

went home to be in God's eternal Kingdom
there to live in peace and perfection.
Their loving family mourns their passing and wish their eternal rest.

We remember **Cristina, Howell Christian** & **Hugh Conroy**
A loving wife and mom,
Sons and Brothers
to **Henry, Hans Clifford** and **Charlene Hazel.**

*Remember Us With Sunshine,
Laughter, joy and song.
No tears please, for we're with Jesus now,
Where we belong.
Although our stay here
With you, was so brief
Giving up earthly form was such a relief.
Throughout our short lives
We've received so much,
Everyone's love and tenderness
in each soft touch.
As you remember us in the coming days,
Remember that we loved you all
in very special ways.
We're laughing with angels now,
Because from here in God's Kingdom,
The world has such a beautiful view.*

Their cremated remains lie in state at Chapel 1 of the Mortuary and Crematory at The Heritage Park, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.
On going wake until January 2, 2007.

Interment will be on January 3, 2007, Wednesday
at The Heritage Park, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City
after 8:00 a.m. Necrological Mass.

Mortuary and Crematory at THE HERITAGE PARK

Sister Pauline of St. Therese

Carmelites Monastery
Laoag City

*Now rests in the infinite warmth and embrace of our Lord.
She joined our Creator
on the 29th of December 2006 at the age of 73.*

She leaves treasured memories in the hearts of her parents **Dr. Victorino J. Datoc** (†) and **Concepcion L. Datoc** (†).

She will always be remembered by her brothers and sisters and in-laws: **Dr. Juanito** and **Tessie Trillo, Dr. Roberto** (†) and **Dra. Minda Ancheta, Lilia** (†) and **Diego Pichay** (†), **Rodolfo** and **Virginia Ruaro, Consuelo** (†), **Benigno** and **Chita Almeda**.

Her remains lie in state at the Carmelites Convent Chapel, Laoag City.

Interment will be on January 2, 2007 at the Carmelites Monastery after the 8:00 a.m. Mass.

JULIETA DOLORFINO MUYCO

*Died peacefully in the Grace of our Lord
on December 29, 2006 at the age of 87.*

Her loving children **JOEL** & **LUNA MUYCO**, **JOCENINE MUYCO**, **JOSIE** & **GIL** (†) **BALANGITAN**, **JUDY** & **EPHRAIM RIO**, **JULIE** and **ENRIQUE QUIZON**, **JENNIFER** & **ROBERT LIM**; grandchildren, great grandchildren, all her relatives and friends request all pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Arlington Memorial Chapel, Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City on Janury 4, 2007 after the 8:00 a.m. Mass at Arlington.

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IT schools to adopt open source software

Move aims to push use of nonproprietary and free programs

IN AN EFFORT to lessen the dominance of Microsoft and other giant information technology (IT) corporations on computer software applications, IT colleges and universities nationwide are now introducing Open Source software in their courses to enhance competencies and provide a better chance of career growth for their students.

Joseph Paul Sianghio, project lead of the Philippine Open Source Initiative (POSITIVE), says that the project gives Filipino programmers and network administrators the skills and tools to implement computer systems using non-proprietary Free and Open Source Software (FOSS).

"We have not seen any reluctance from IT schools in the country. They are very much interested as they now have the software tools to teach beyond theories without having to pay for license fees," Sianghio says of the schools.

Alex Ybasco, president of the Philippine Society of IT Educators (PSITE) further says the initiative also supports the industry by building the supply base of open source technology professionals. With the adoption of open source technologies, schools particularly the smaller ones will benefit on the cost savings from software licenses.

In a series of training sessions from April to October 2006, some 265 professors of computer courses from 115 schools nationwide participated in a hands-on train-the-trainer program sponsored by POSITIVE. Workshops were held in Baguio, Angeles, Cebu, Iligan, Davao and Metro Manila. The participating teachers were taught the necessary materials and tools to effectively teach the courseware to their students and advocate its use in their respective schools.

The courseware includes syllabi, presentation slides, instructor's guides, and laboratory and exercise workbooks for 5 college subject areas: IT Fundamentals, Operating Systems, Database Administration, Database Management Systems and Web Programming. These are made available for free to schools and universities through www.positive.ph.

To complement the training of students in open source technologies, POSITIVE aims to place at least 45 students from partner schools in internship programs with partner companies by the end of 2006. Of these, at least 20 students are expected to be fully employed upon completion of their university degrees.

POSITIVE is a public-private partnership project of the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and Wireless Services Asia in cooperation with the European IT Service Center Foundation.

Ways to make people feel like a million bucks

A LEADER'S WAY

John C. Maxwell

RANKING AMONG THE GREATEST Christmas movie classics, It's a Wonderful Life tells a beautiful story about the priceless value of relationships.

The story follows the life of George Bailey, a man who sacrifices his dreams to travel the world, instead choosing to stay in his hometown and run the family-owned business after the sudden death of his father.

Throughout the movie, George's humanity draws us into his life. As we watch him grow from a child to a young man, and then to a husband, father, and business owner, we see how George continually places the well-being of others ahead of his own interests.

Like George Bailey, most people can trace their successes and failures to the relationships in their lives.

As a leader, you can't be a loner. Your success is tied to inspiring a shared vision. In this edition of Leadership Wired, we'll explore eight practices whereby you can win with others.

1. Let people know you need them

When your dream is bigger than you are, you only have two choices: Give up or get help. Inspire others to join in the dream by letting them know they are needed. Every person has a longing to be significant; to make a contribution; to be a part of something noble and purposeful. Invite people into a vision, allow them to participate in making the vision a reality, and show them how their efforts are part of making a dream come true.

2. Create a memory and visit it often

Instead of accepting life's lot, take responsibility for pursuing dreams worthy of memory. Exercise creativity to push for memorable achievements even when times are tough. Commemorate defining moments through mementos, and use the mementos as symbols to celebrate accomplishments and perpetuate memories.

3. Give others a reputation to uphold

Form a high opinion of people and back that opinion by equipping and empowering those around you for critical assignments.

When interacting with your people, don't allow them to be distracted by past failure; instead, steer them toward a promising future.

Paint a picture of the potential you see inside of a person, lead them toward the realization of that potential, and hold them accountable to be their best.

4. Share a secret with someone

A Sicilian proverb says, "Only the spoon knows what is stirring in the pot." When you allow another person to know what is stirring within you, giving them a "taste" of a plan or idea, you instantly make a meaningful connection with them.

5. Do for others what they can't do for themselves

As a leader, you have the precious responsibility of taking your people to places they could never reach on their own.

You can do this in three ways: Connection, invitation and impartation.

First, take the time to connect your people into strategic relationships they would never otherwise form.

Next, you'll be able to offer opportunities for people to join a team which will achieve more as a unit than any of its members could individually.

Finally, share your ideas, and by doing so, you'll impart knowledge that others do not possess on their own.

6. Find the keys to their heart

Uncover the passions inside those you lead by asking questions about each person's dreams, values and strengths.

Accept and appreciate the fact that every individual is different, but constantly search for common ground to serve as a point of connection.

7. Practice the 30-second rule

Within the first 30 seconds of a conversation, look to say something encouraging to the person you're speaking with.

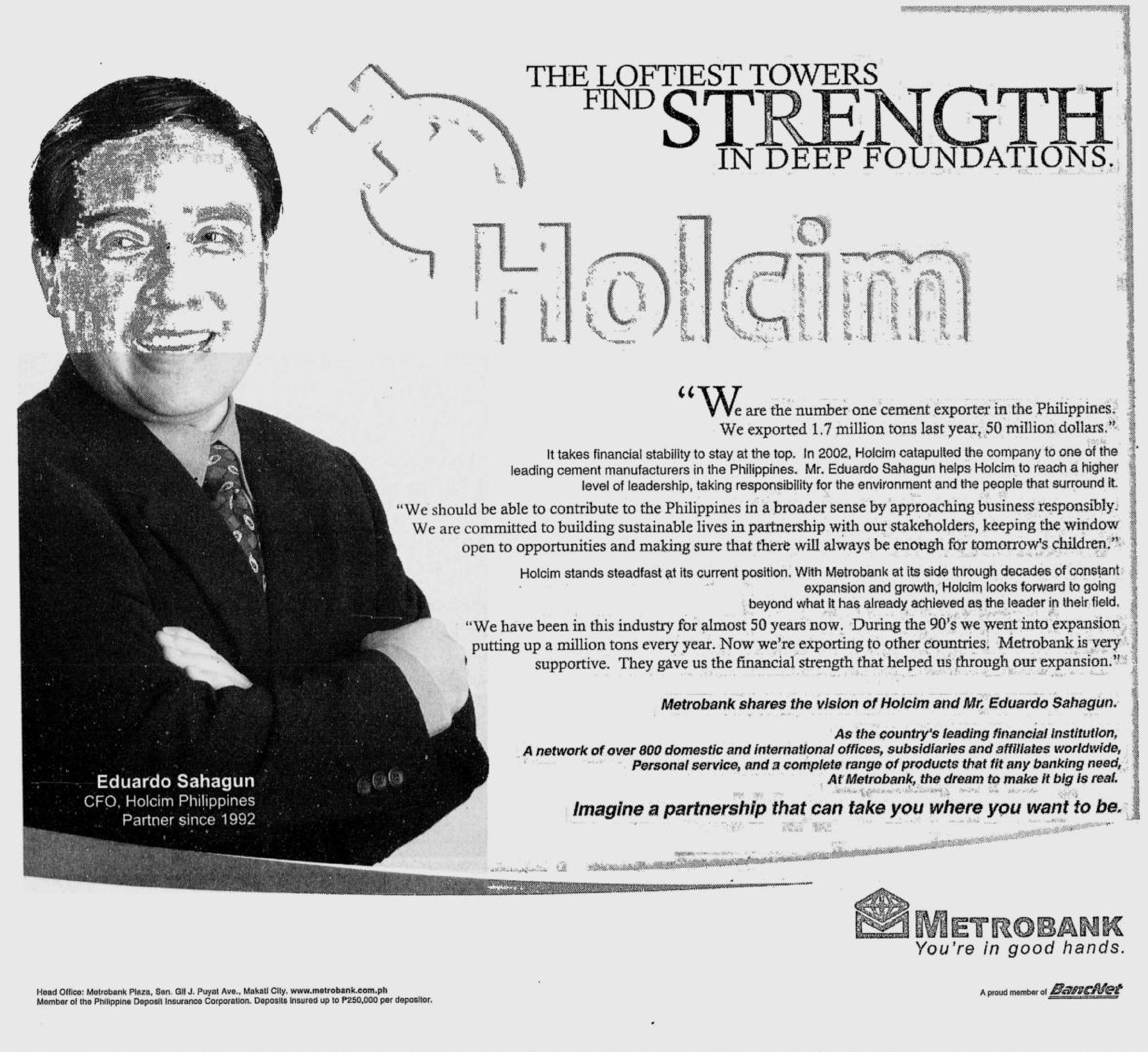
By doing so, you'll give others the Triple "A" treatment: Attention, affirmation and appreciation. When you add to others, they'll be drawn to you.

8. Write notes of encouragement

Encouraging notes have a personal touch and represent an investment by the writer. Such notes are remembered by the recipient long after the writer has forgotten them.

If you want to reach the top, don't run over others. Likely, the only way you'll reach the top is to be carried there by others.

For information on John Maxwell's in-house or public leadership or teamwork workshops, please email us at maxwell@inspire.ph or call 813-2049/2732 and ask for Jesi or Bing. Text MAXWELL ON to 4632 (Smart) to get daily SMS leadership insights from John Maxwell.



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Holcim stands steadfast at its current position. With Metrobank at its side through decades of constant expansion and growth, Holcim looks forward to going beyond what it has already achieved as the leader in their field.

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IN THIS ISSUE
- **Wesley Valenzuela's** iconoclastic art /C8
- **Music lovers' choice** for 2006 /D7

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Subsection Editor **Lito B. Zulueta**
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ARTS AND DESIGN 2006

Worst art of the year

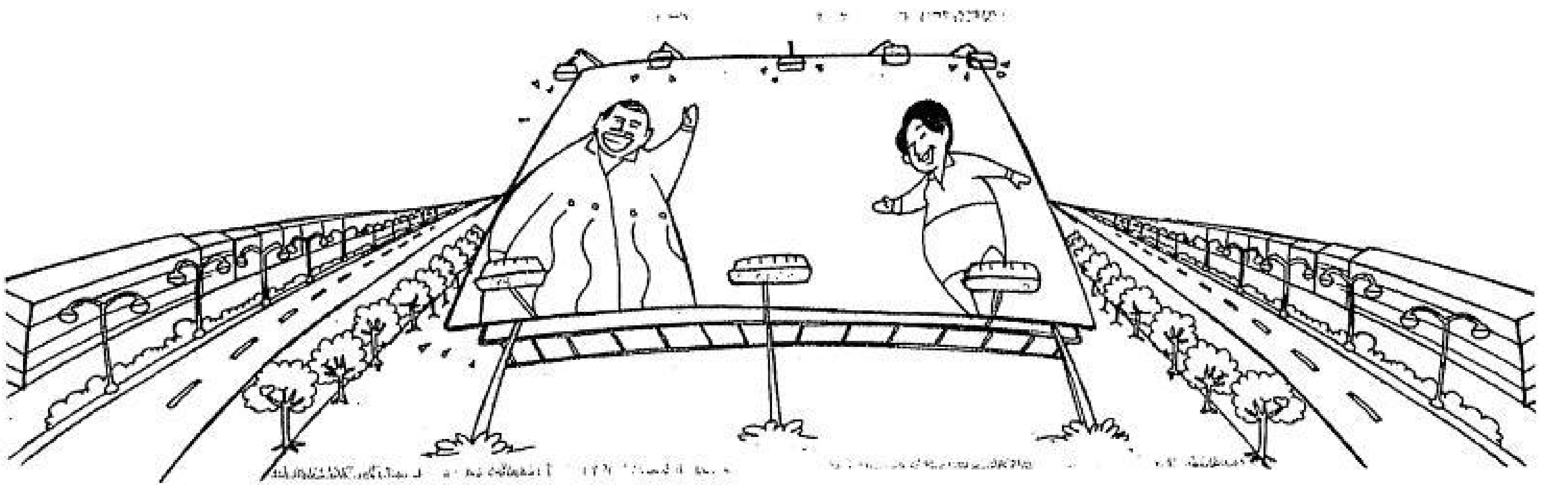


ILLUSTRATION: ANTHONY MISTADES

Compiled by Lito B. Zulueta

Ugly Goliaths

Hands down, the worst art of the year was the art of the giant billboard. They were the worst by sheer size (and sheer gall) although smaller bills and boards, such as those posted by politicians of all sizes—from the pettiest barangay captain to the most pretentious mayor, governor, representative and senator—were just as bad. The giant billboards destroyed the landscape of Metro Manila and dwarfed everything around them, filling the space with their brazen ugliness.

Advertisers and politicians seemed to have conspired to impose their sordid ugliness on the people. Remember that at the wake of Typhoon Milenyo, which toppled billboards and exposed their hazards to the public, the politicians outdid one another in threatening to banish the giant advertisements. That was in October. Last month, barely two months after the political grandstanding, the billboards were back. With a vengeance.

The worst billboard of the year? Envelope, please. And the title goes to—the Belo Clinic billboard on Edsa, Guadalupe, Makati. It's as big as heaven (not for nothing does it occupy the Guadalupe promontory which is the property of San Carlos Seminary of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila), and it's stretched as wide as space—or as wide as the stretched faces of the models on the billboard.

The billboard was terribly bad not only for its sheer magnitude but also for its concept and styling. It showed the cosmetic surgeon and her beautiful creations—all show-biz celebrities—in strictly formal dress code, amid dreamy drapery and velvet luxury. The stiff poses and the gothic excess conjured memories of the Addams Family or Madame Tussaud's waxworks.

On the bright side, the billboard fully complemented the space around it. Together with the MRT, the Guadalupe Bridge, and the busy industries north and south of Pasig, the billboard and its subjects were a marvel of engineering—or reengineering.

Overpricing

Aside from auction houses artificially driving up prices of not-so-established young artists included in the bidding, some senior artists demanded stiff prices for their works without any market basis, resulting in price distortions. Worse, the older and established artists who postured themselves as "the next National Artist," whatever that means, influenced young artists under their mentorship to demand high prices, dismaying several galleries promoting the works of emerging voices. The situation showed how professionalizing the arts regime in the country remained problematic, with big egos and deep greed, not craftsmanship or market dynamics, determining pricing.

Global Pinoy design

Kenneth Cobonpue's triumph in the Design for Asia Awards—in which his rattan Lolah Chair shared top honors with designs from Nokia, Samsung and Sony—as well as news that he was a favorite of Brad Pitt and he had been asked to design a set for the forthcoming "Ocean's 13" movie, showed that Philippine design had come of age. Designs by **Budji Layug, Tes Pasola** and **Tony Gonzales** have also gained renown, establishing the Philippines as a global center of design. There's a need to sustain the momentum by state subsidy to enable designers and design houses to participate in trade fairs abroad. The education system, too, should promote Industrial Design as a course of choice for young design-inclined Filipinos.

A blast from the arts

By Constantino C. Tejero

PHILIPPINE POLITICS may be a mess, the economy is on the brink, and the poor will always be poor, but the one thing still alive and kicking in the country all year round is the arts. A salute to the Filipino artist then for always deserving of our thumbs up, way, way up.

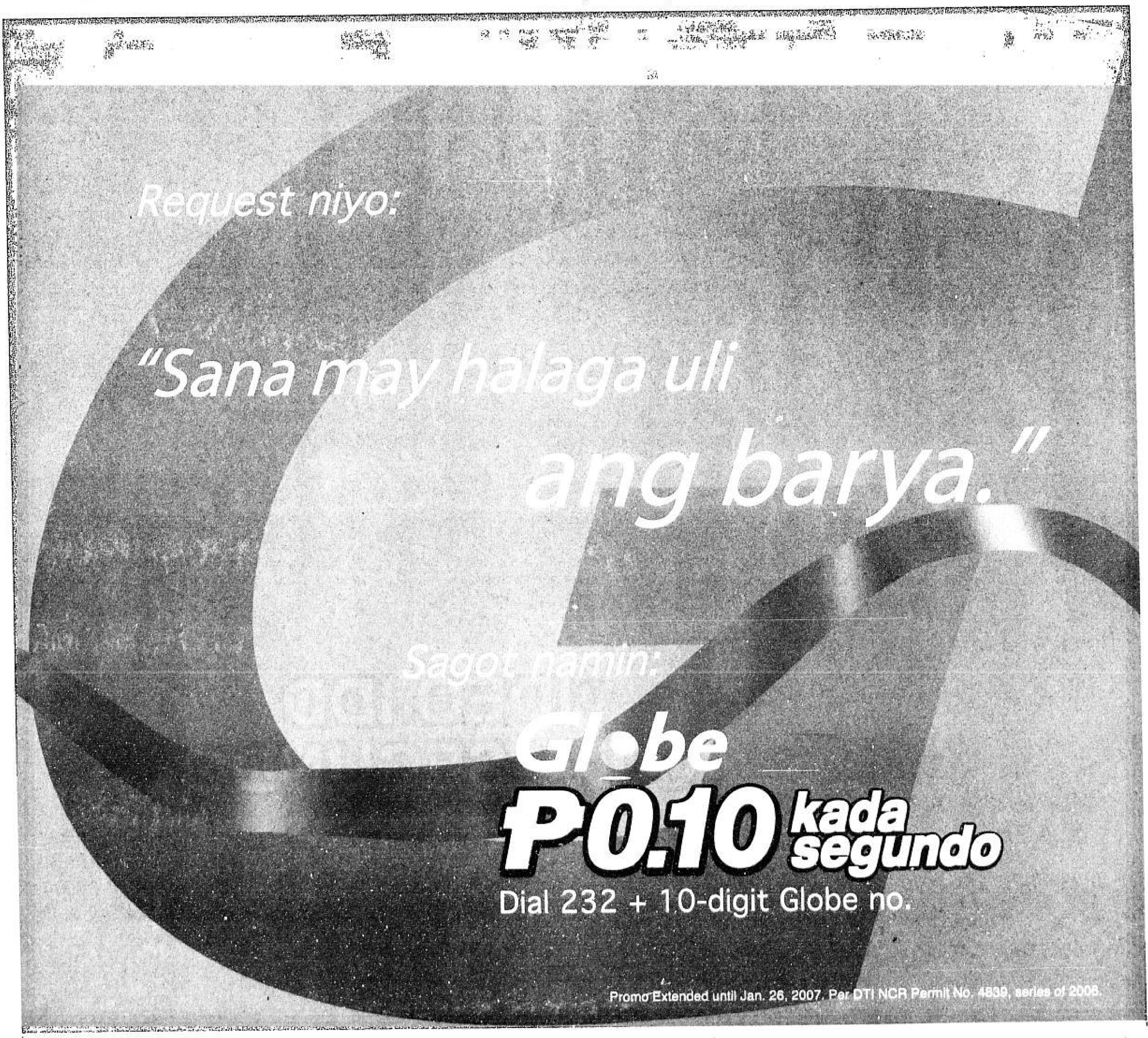
Elderly but still potent

Some senior artists don't seem to dry up of creative juices, as they never fail to mount exhibits of their most recent works with undiminished potency. Just when you think they've long been rolling in their laurels, you stumble on new works by the likes of **Arturo Luz, Juvenal Sansó, Roberto Chabet, Malang Santos.** Even the nonagenarian **Anita Magsaysay-Ho** startles the art world now and then with a brilliant piece or two.

Young but very, very strong

Upcoming artists and relative unknowns often come up with strong art that can hold a candle to works by veterans. In June, **Jesus Genotiva** held his first solo show of expressionist

A BLAST/C2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A blast from the arts

From page C1

portraits so potent one couldn't look at them with equilibrium. One **Marlon Magbanua** impresses with abstraction of such fineness it should shame the clumsy brushwork of a few overhyped abstractionists.

Still on the frontline

Artists we haven't heard from for some time have returned to the scene. **Cesare** and **Jean Marie Syjuco** came back from abroad and continued their series of avant-gardist installations and performances. Some we thought have stopped production, such as **Red Mansueto** and **Alan Rivera**, reappeared in group exhibits with interesting innovations on their respective art.

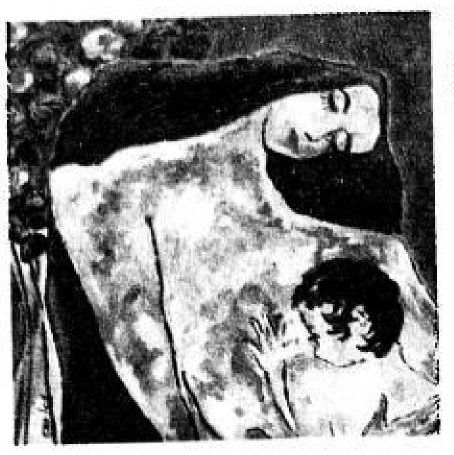
Hearts of gold

Artists can always be relied on to raise funds for charity. Early this year, Kulay Marikina exhibited nearly 100 artworks whose proceeds went to indigent cancer-stricken patients of the Philippine Children's Medical Center. This month, **Impy Pilapil** and **Ann Pamintuan** are exhibiting their sculptural pieces for the cause of Make-a-Wish and Kythe Foundation. This only underscores the fact that artists are really humanitarians at heart.

Excitement of awards

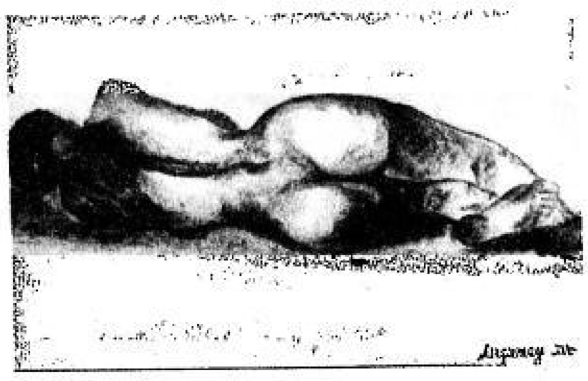
The Thirteen Artists Award, now given by the Cultural Center of the Philippines every three years, proves to be as exciting as ever. Many of the awardees this year are precisely the same people the development of whose respective art we have been watching for some years now: **Jeho Bitancor, Jayson Oliveria, Lyra Abueg Garcellano, Gary-Ross Pastrana, Luisito Cordero, Ma. Cristina Valdezco, Jevijoe Vitug, Mariano Ching, Daniel Coquilla, Lena Cobangbang, Ronald Anading, Eugene Jarque** and **Yasmin Sison-Ching**. This award can be more exciting than the National Artists Award as its choices hold an element of surprise while the latter's are often a foregone conclusion.

VISUAL ARTS



Rocha at Yellow Door

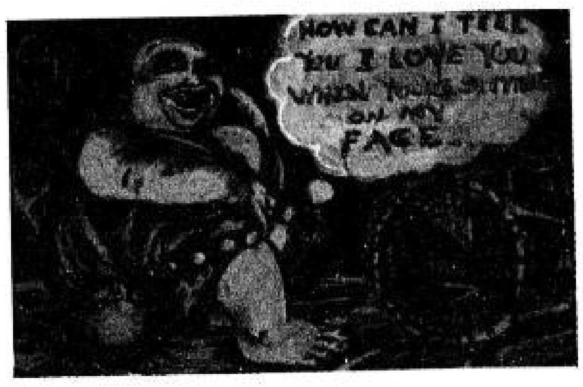
Yellow Door Gallery and Power Plant Mall present "Carnival of Color," an exhibit of acrylic paintings by Carlos Rocha, until Dec. 23 at the Power Plant Mall. Rocha's paintings have evolved into works of art in Fauvist style. His sculptures are expressive, exhibiting graceful tension and movement. Call 0920-9624347.



Anulacion exhibit

Dr. Sangumay D. Anulacion mounts her one-woman exhibit "La Femme," Jan 6, at the Anulacion Residence in Rosaville Subdivision, Orani, Bataan. "La Femme" is an 80-piece assemblage of paintings in soft pastel depicting women in their various forms and emotions. Her paintings, according to art mentor Fernando Sena, show an attitude of luxurious repose that create a horizontal and vertical action in the composition.

Lee at Finale


HOW CAN I TELL YOU I LOVE YOU WHEN YOU'RE SITTING ON MY FACE...

Finale Art Gallery (4/F SM Megamall A) kicks off 2007 with Romeo Lee's "Si Lee Things Happen" opening Jan. 4. The exhibit, which portrays Lee's characteristic humor and irony, unleashes a gamut of extraordinary creatures—obese nymphs, malevolent infants,scarecrow ghosts—that traffic in a dark, malodorous and uncanny otherworld of the imagination, hostaged to light by the artist's well-etched and vivid strokes. Call 6342411 or visit www.finaleartfile.com.

TAM Austria attends the last Christie's auction of modern and contemporary Southeast Asian Art at the International Auction Center at the Hong Kong Convention Center. With the artist (left) are Sistine Austria, Divine Austria and art collectors John Wadle and wife.

PORTRAIT artist William Cadag's "The Old Church" at the Asia Art Gallery in Shangri-La Plaza presents depictions of historic churches. Photo shows the artist (third from left) with art collectors Antonio Dee, Tintin Bersola and Julius Babao at the exhibit's opening.

Book immortalizes Premio Zobel

LOURDES C. Brillantes immortalizes the country's oldest literary award in her book "81 Years of Premio Zóbel: A Legacy of Filipino Literature in Spanish." Photo shows Philippine Ambassador to Spain Joseph D. Bernardo, Georgina Padilla y Zóbel (the book's publisher), Spanish Ambassador Ignacio Sagaz, Brillantes and Alejandro Padilla y Zóbel.

THE BOOK, "81 YEARS OF THE PREMIO Zóbel: A Legacy of Philippine Literature in Spanish," written by Lourdes Castrillo Brillantes, the Premio Zóbel Awardee of 1998, and a member of the Academia Filipina de la Lengua Española, has been released.

The book is a publication of Georgina Padilla y Zóbel, granddaughter of Don Enrique Zóbel de Ayala, founder of the Premio, with the support of the Spanish Program for Cultural Cooperation.

With 81 years behind it, Premio Zóbel is the oldest literary award in the Philippines. Don Enrique established the Premio to preserve and revivify the Spanish language in the nation, and to honor and promote the best Filipino literary works in Spanish.

Included in the book are brief biographies of the awardees and excerpts from their winning works.

This award has been bestowed on eminent writers and intellectuals: Gomez Windham, the invincible *balagtasan* duo Bernabe and Balmori, León Ma. Guerrero, Antonio Abad, Guerrero-Barranco, Zaragoza, Laygo.

Ardent Hispanistas and honorable politicians collaborated in its success. Nationalist Claro Mayo Recto, the brothers Mariano and Jesus Cuenco, the jurist Arsenio Dizon, Jaime de Veyra, Jorge Bocobo, Rafael Palma and Carlos P. Romulo, were members of its jury.

Copies of the book are available at Ayala Museum and at the Filipinas Heritage Library in the Nielson Tower.

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Art on top of the world

"MUNDANE Affinity"

By Constantino C. Tejero

ONE OF THE MOST IMPROBABLE places to see art is among the clouds. That was what we stumbled into after zipping up to the 89th floor of Taipei 101, the world's tallest building, in 37 seconds via the world's fastest elevator.

In the indoor observatory there, mounted on black pedestals in the middle of the circular lane around a gift shop and a drinks bar, is a glistering array of numerous sculptures in pure gold. This is the handiwork of Wu Ching, a Taiwanese Cellini if there is one.

These delicate pieces have been praised for their "touch of naturalness and emphasis on life that demonstrate the Eastern Zen." Imagine finely wrought gold brooches of vegetal and insect forms scaled to life. Our impression when we first saw them, in fact, was of gigantic filigrees.

The motifs are familiar in Chinese nature painting: flowers, leaves, ants, dragonflies, moths. What's astonishing is their rendering in pure gold and in such scale—and how anatomically correct they are, and how witty the artist to craft in such noble material the banalities of lower life forms!

In "Love of Dragonflies," the two insects in gold mounted on slate-gray stone are actually copulating. We're not sure how zoologically correct the sexual positioning is, but we can't help but be impressed by the winking knowingness that went into that tugging and pulling of tails and fluttering of wings.

The erotic excitement is there to be sure, but also the ambiguity of the sexual act—looking as it is like a blend of lovemaking and quarrel, verging between wrestling and embrace.

In "Parental Love," two yellow objects mounted on black agate, the parent ant may be feeding, nursing or grooming its young, but the two also look as if they're fighting.

"MOTH Orchid"

As noted by the exhibition catalogue: "The innate value of natural objects is the fundamental resource of the design itself, as well as the core of self-reflection... Wu Ching's philosophy has been the true expression of nature and the demonstration of life that displays the beauty of natural simplicity."

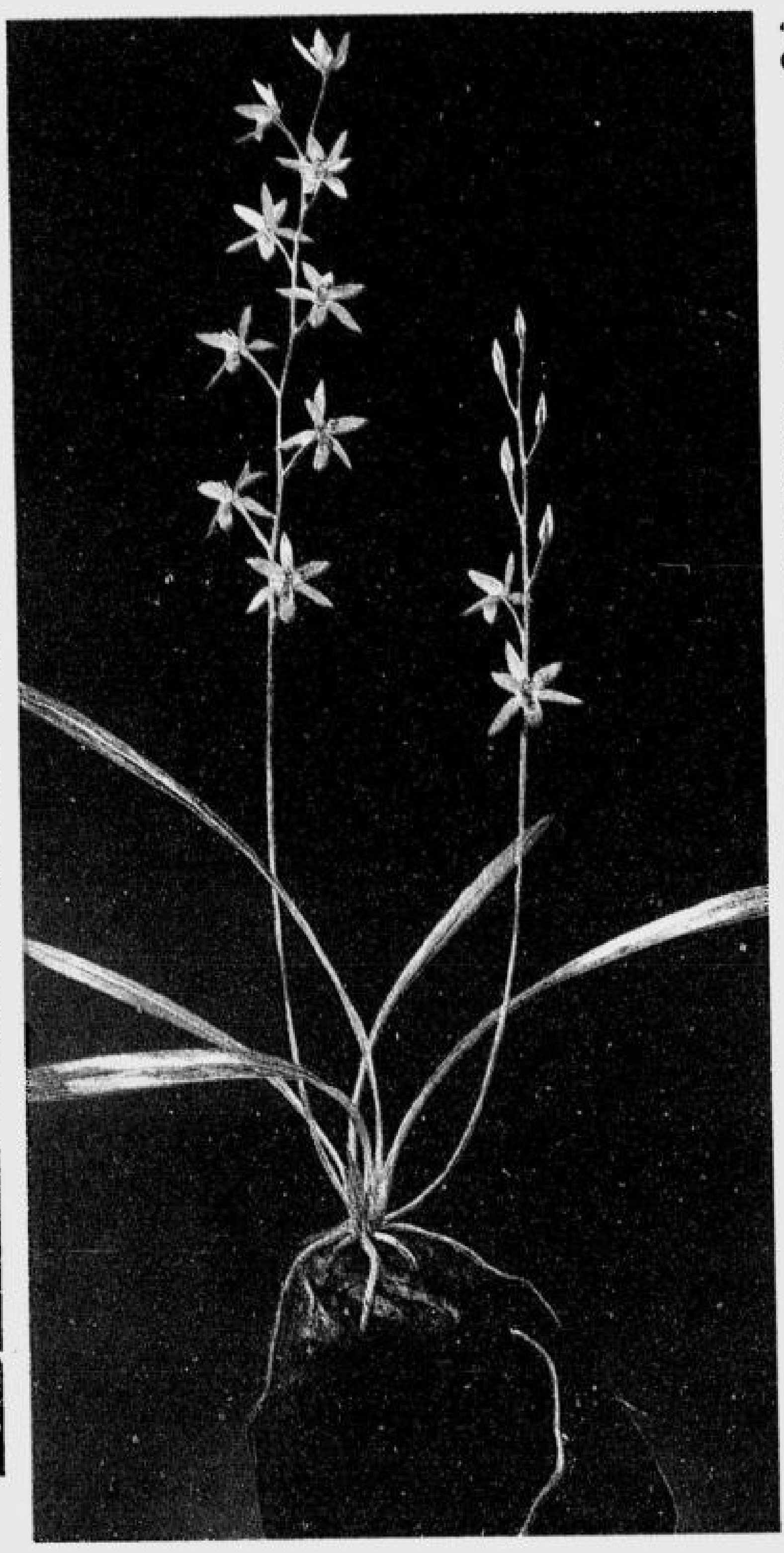
The artist's careful observation of nature is truly remarkable—indeed, attaining perfection. Consider "Moth Orchid," where the nocturnal insect spreads its wings among the petals and appears to be one of them. The flower buds, obovate leaves and network of roots are particularly well observed—a naturalness of form achieved by precise crafting of material.

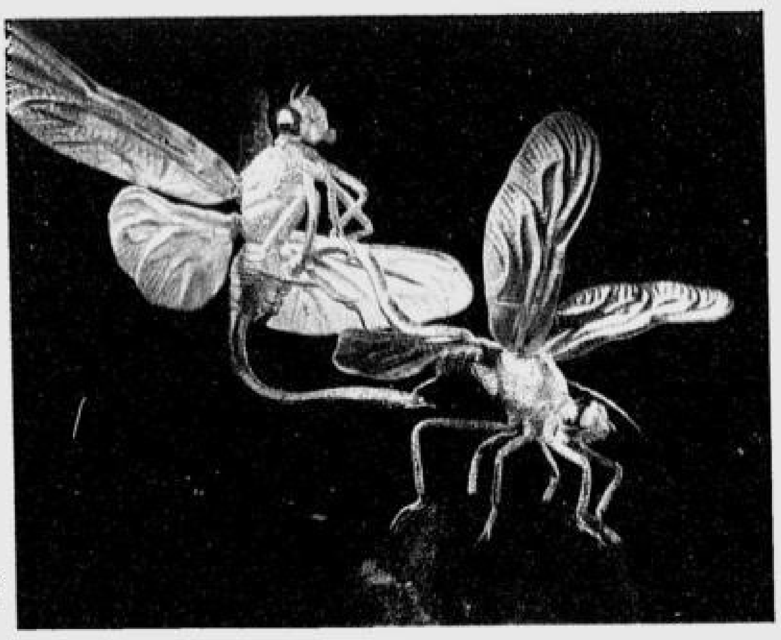
To appreciate how precise Wu Ching's craftsmanship is, just look at "Mundane Affinity" up close. Here one can espy beads of moisture on the petal and leaf, tiny nodes on the skin of the twig, and the wings of moth look almost gossamer one swears here gold has become transparent.

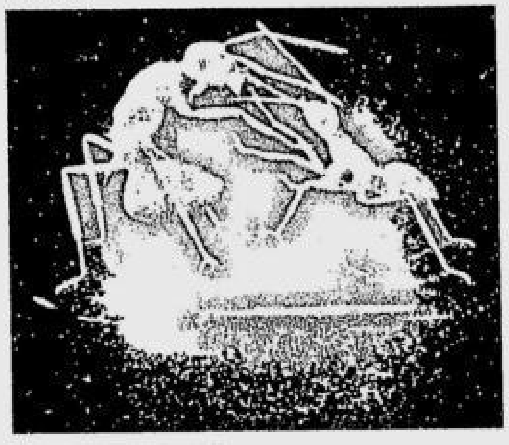
Each of these pieces attains a sense of perfect balance, particularly in the horizontal and vertical symmetry of "New Year's Orchid," where a ground orchid is precariously holding on to a black rock with its roots, outspreading its bladelike leaves in the air, while upthrusting with stateliness and grace its bloom-laden stems to the sky.

The state of being flimsy—of fragile objects and frail human beings—is, of course, the immemorial theme of Zen. But let's not also forget that, to the Chinese, gold is the symbol of eternity.

THE ARTIST'S hands craft a noble material into perfection.


"NEW YEAR'S Orchid"


"LOVE of Dragonflies"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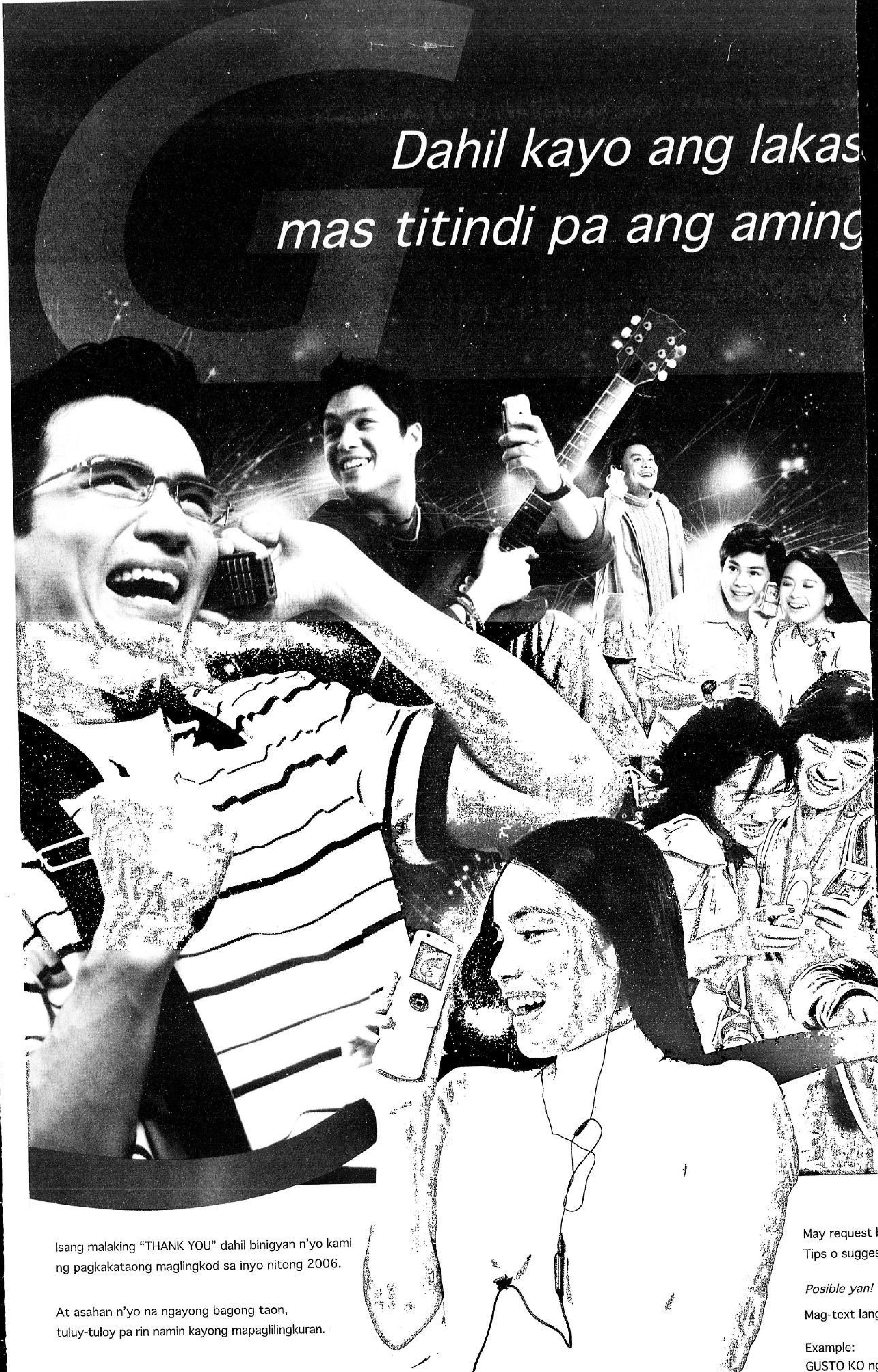
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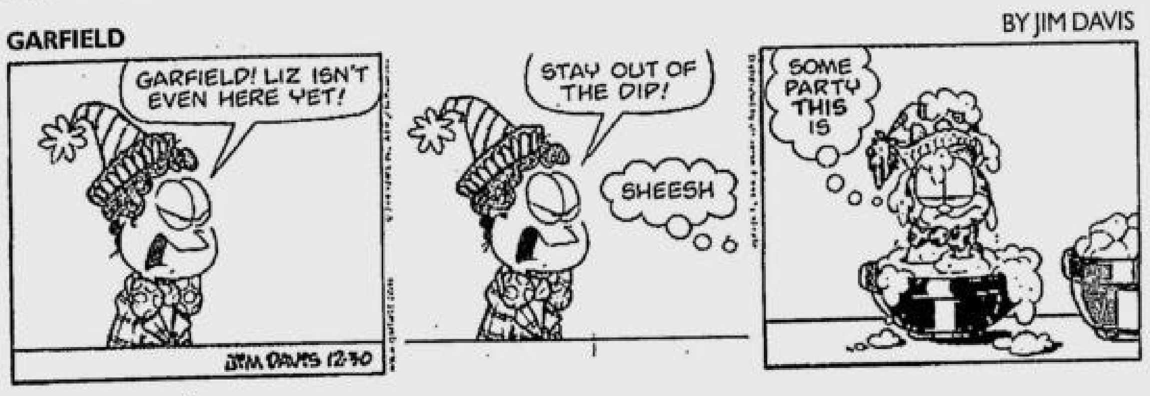
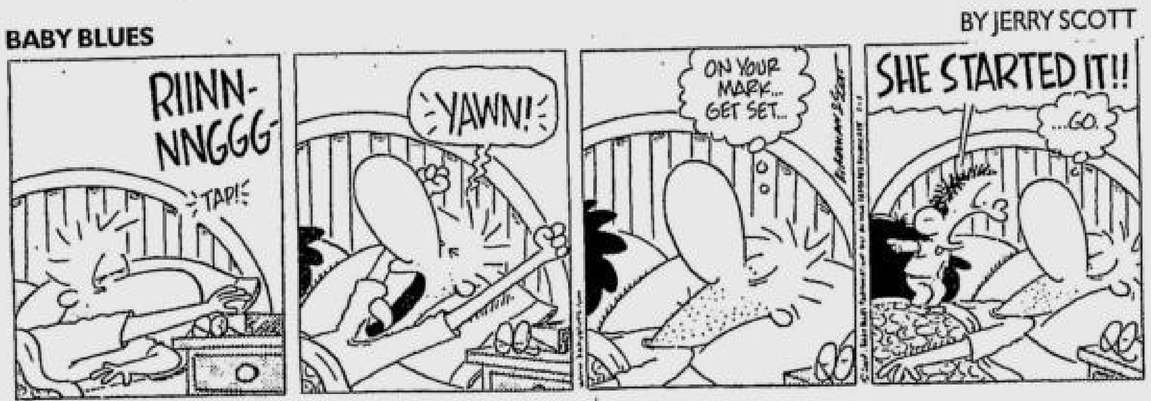
BY JIM DAVIS


GARFIELD! LIZ ISN'T EVEN HERE YET!
STAY OUT OF THE DIP!
SHEESH
SOME PARTY THIS IS
JIM DAVIS 12-30

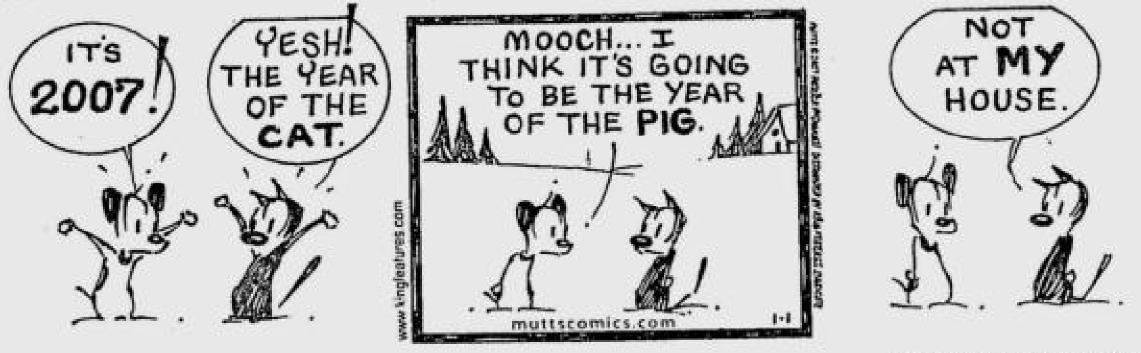
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


RIINN-NNGGG-
TAP!
YAWN!
ON YOUR MARK... GET SET...
SHE STARTED IT!!
...GO.

MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL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YESH! THE YEAR OF THE CAT.
MOOCH... I THINK IT'S GOING TO BE THE YEAR OF THE PIG.
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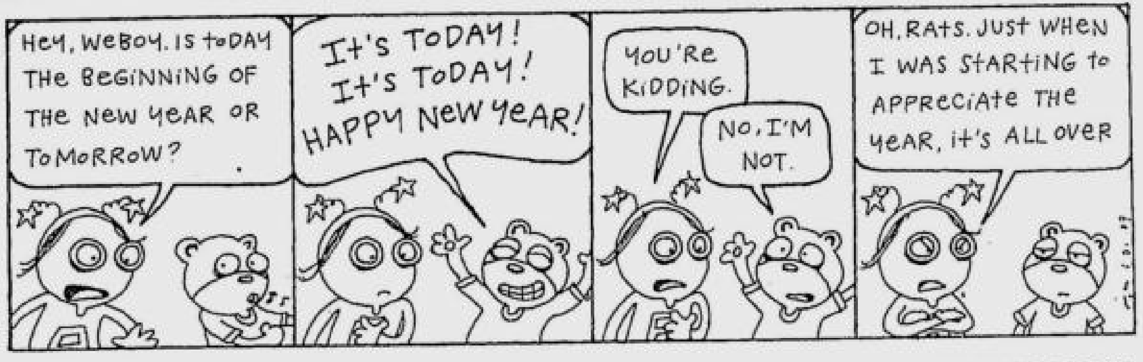
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Hey, WeBoy. Is today The Beginning of The New year or ToMorrow?
It's Today! It's Today! Happy New Year!
You're kidding.
No, I'm not.
Oh, Rats. Just when I was starting to appreciate the year, it's all over

KIKO MACHINE

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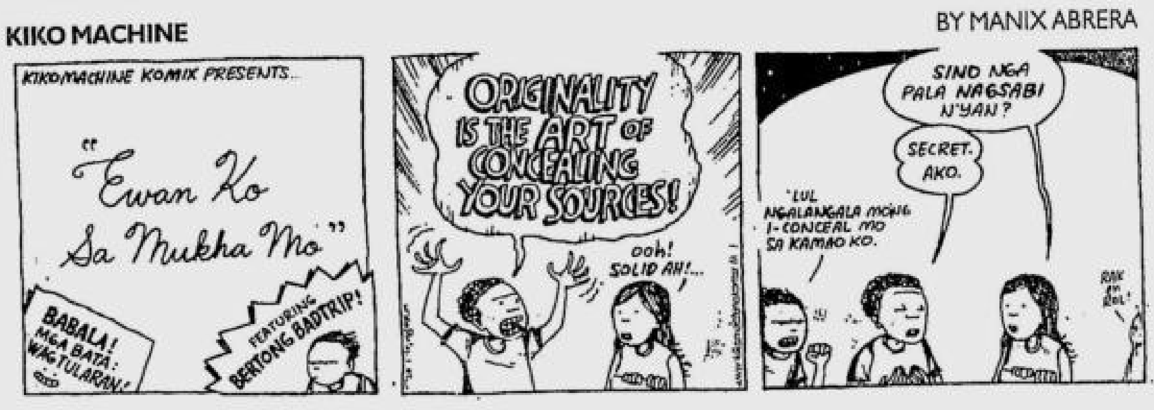
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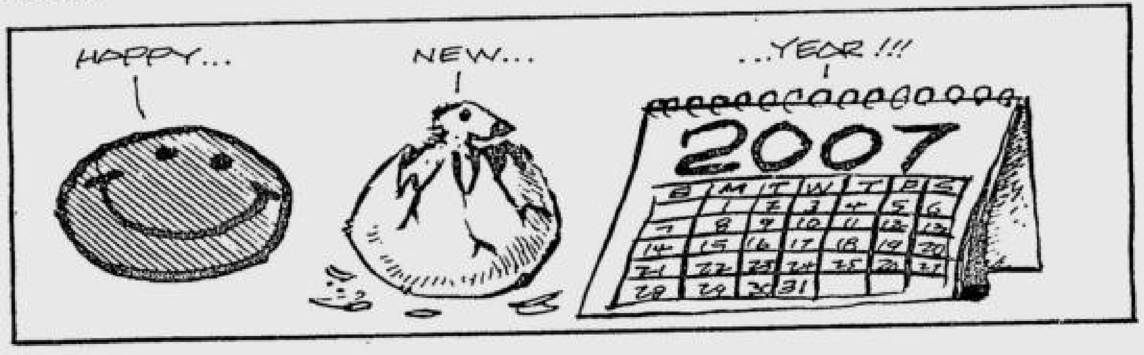
SINO NGA PALA NAGSABI N'YAN?
SECRET. AKO.
'LUL NGALANGALA MO'NG I-CONCEAL MO SA KAMAO KO.
RAK EN ROL!

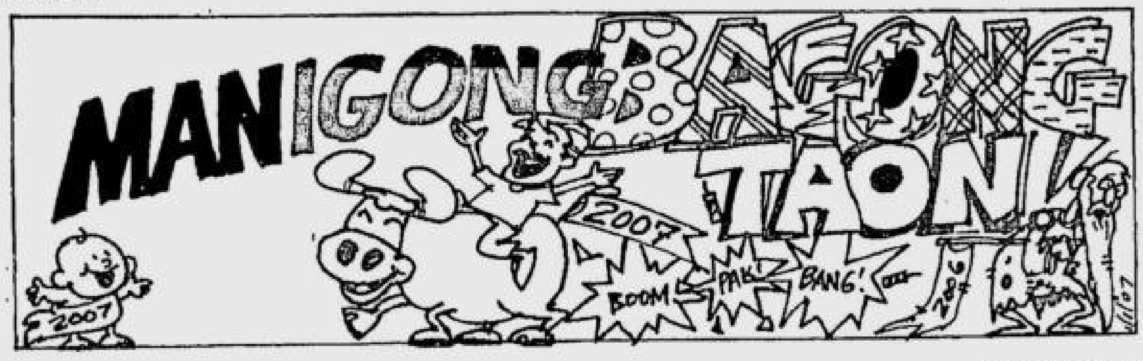
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


HAPPY...
NEW...
...YEAR !!!
2007

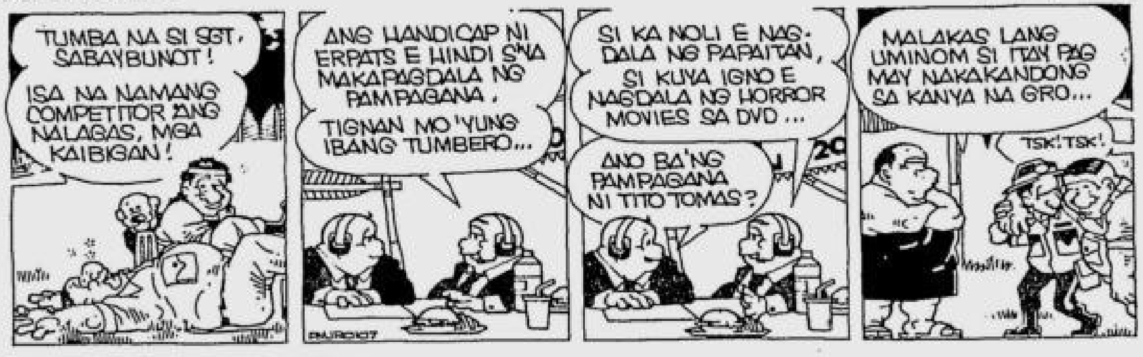
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


MANIGONG BAGONG TAON!
2007
2007
BOOM
PAK!
BANG!

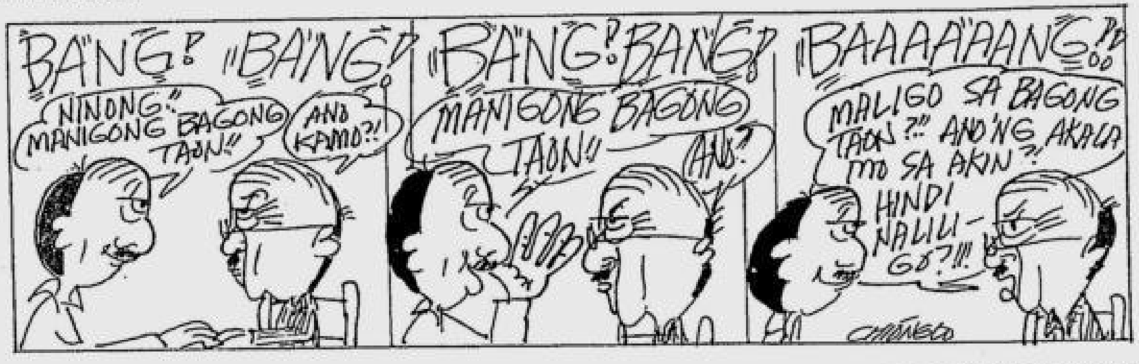
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


TUMBA NA SI SGT. SABAYBUNOT!
ISA NA NAMANG COMPETITOR ANG NALAGAS, MGA KAIBIGAN!
ANG HANDICAP NI ERPATS E HINDI S'NA MAKAPAGDALA NG PAMPAGANA.
TIGNAN MO 'YUNG IBANG TUMBERO...
SI KA NOLI E NAG-DALA NG PAPAITAN, SI KUYA IGNO E NAGDALA NG HORROR MOVIES SA DVD...
ANO BA'NG PAMPAGANA NI TITO TOMAS?
MALAKAS LANG UMINOM SI ITAY PAG MAY NAKAKANDONG SA KANYA NA GRO...
TSK! TSK!

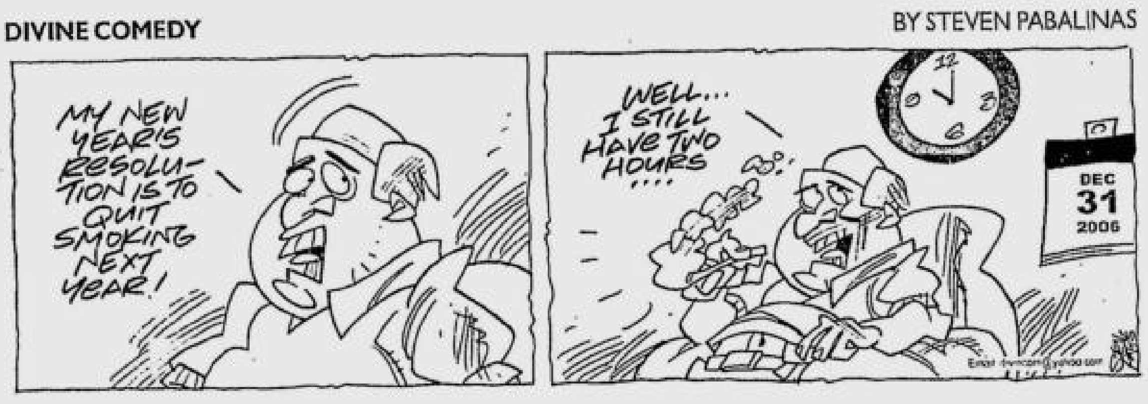
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


BANG! BANG!
NINONG! MANIGONG BAGONG TAON!
ANO KAMO?!
BANG! BANG!
MANIGONG BAGONG TAON!
ANO?
BAAAAAANG!
MALIGO SA BAGONG TAON?! ANO'NG AKALA MO SA AKIN?! HINDI NALILIGO?!!

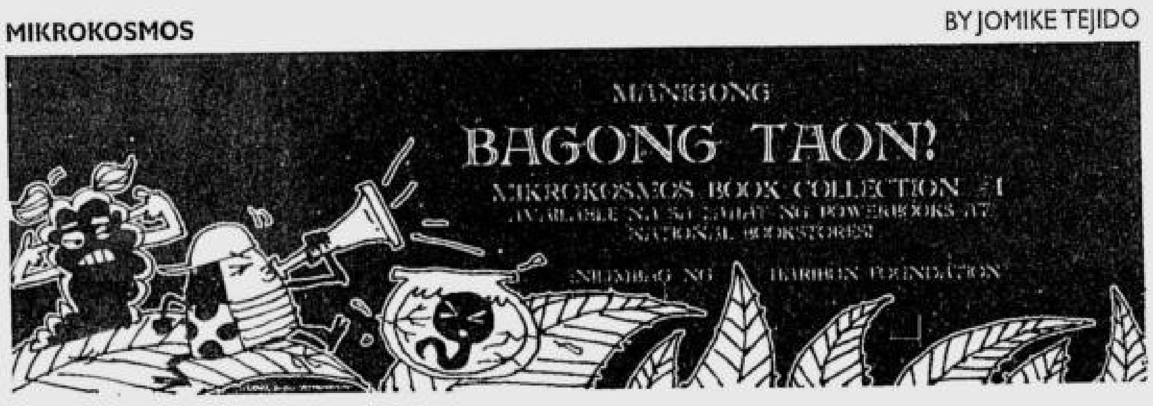
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION IS TO QUIT SMOKING NEXT YEAR!
WELL... I STILL HAVE TWO HOURS....
DEC 31 2006

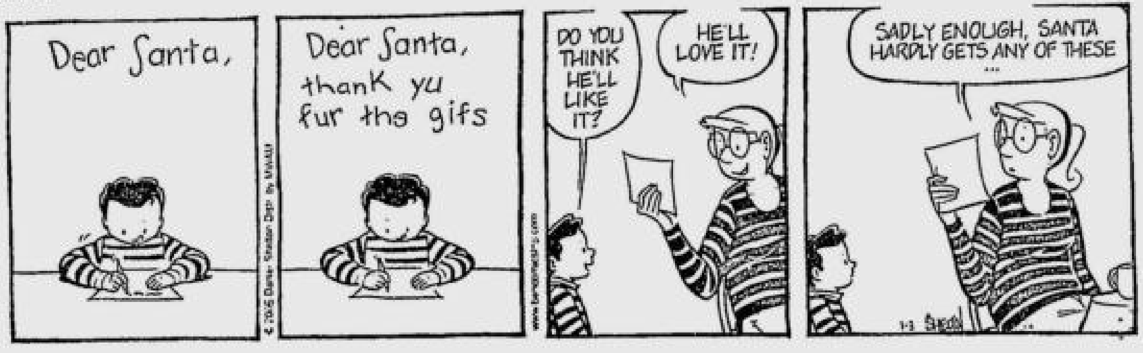
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO

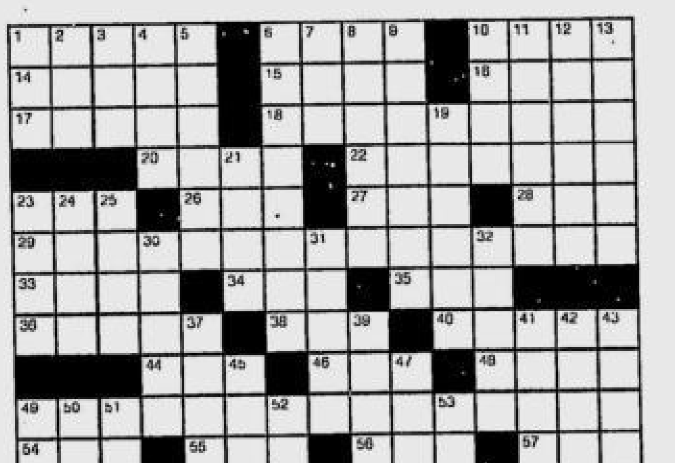

MANIGONG
BAGONG TAON!
MIKROKOSMOS BOOK COLLECTION #1
HARIBON FOUNDATION

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


Dear Santa,
Dear Santa, thank yu fur the gifs
DO YOU THINK HE'LL LIKE IT?
HE'LL LOVE IT!
SADLY ENOUGH, SANTA HARDLY GETS ANY OF THESE...

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Willy A. Wiseman
New York, NY
1/1/07

ACROSS
1 Grinding tooth
6 Took a straw
10 Actress Neuwirth
14 Disintegrate slowly
15 Roman way
16 Sea of Asia
17 Israel's desert
18 Genuine
20 Missile shelter
22 Venetian or Florentine
23 Propel in a high arc
26 Acoustic organ
27 Always, in verse
28 Tony-winner Hagen
29 Start of a catty comment?
33 W. alliance
34 What'd I tell ya?
35 Slangy negative
36 Tense situation
38 SASE, e.g.
40 Clunker car
44 "Nova" network
46 Moody or Silver
48 Fall cleanup tool
49 End of catty comment?
54 Tiny veggie
55 __ of Galilee
56 Besides
57 Young Scot
58 %
60 Seth's son
62 Opulent British era
64 Gullible saps
68 Stepped down
69 Writer Bagnold
70 Bread ingredient
71 Camera part
72 St. Louis gridders
73 Wander

DOWN
1 Stag attendees
2 Mine's yield
3 Ship's record
4 Fruit coolers
5 Exam cramming
6 Formerly married woman
7 A1A or 66, e.g.
8 More unworldly
9 Like an unlisted candidate
10 Fertility god
11 Rare-earth element
12 Golf-ball material
13 Verdugo and Firsova
19 Of part of a foot
21 Produces eggs
23 Come ashore
24 Shortstop Vizquel
25 Greek letter
30 Pizzazz
31 Clay or Frick
32 Pipsqueak
37 Degrader
39 Struggles
41 Heavy hammer
42 Gumbo veggie
43 Uncool kid
45 Money waster
47 Dodge model
49 Request another hearing
50 Tailor's need
51 Evolutionary man
52 Copper crust
53 Guthrie and Herman
59 Felines
61 Tallow ingredient
63 Set sights
65 __ excellence
66 NASA partner
67 Pig pen

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

L	E	S	S	E	N	E	D	■	C	U	P	O	L	A
O	N	P	A	R	O	L	E	■	O	R	A	T	E	D
V	A	R	I	E	T	A	L	■	A	N	Y	O	N	E
E	M	I	L	■	A	T	I	L	T	■	S	O	D	S
G	E	N	■	■	■	I	L	E	■	■	■	L	E	T
A	L	T	S	■	S	N	A	G	S	■	M	E	R	E
M	E	E	T	I	N	G	H	O	U	S	E	■	■	■
E	R	R	A	T	A	■	■	■	M	O	U	S	S	E
■	■	■	R	E	P	O	S	S	E	S	S	I	N	G
S	C	A	R	■	S	T	E	E	R	■	E	G	E	R
T	A	D	■	■	■	T	A	X	■	■	■	N	A	E
E	R	O	O	■	C	O	N	T	I	■	S	A	K	S
A	R	R	O	Y	O	■	C	A	N	N	A	B	I	S
L	I	E	N	E	E	■	E	N	R	O	L	L	E	E
S	E	D	A	N	S	■	S	T	I	N	K	E	R	S

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1/1/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're extremely organized, competent and efficient. Because of this, you often take charge of any situation. You're very honest and loyal, which is why you easily earn the respect of others. You generally keep your emotions to yourself; however, socially, you're charming and well-liked. The year ahead can be one of the best years of your life. Take your power!

Birthdate of: Eden Riegel, actress; J.D. Salinger, author; Frank Langella, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): As the Full Moon approaches, you might feel increasing tension when dealing with authority figures, especially parents and bosses. This will be over quickly. Just be patient with everyone, and life will be easier.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Be extra careful when walking, jogging or driving in the next two days. The approaching Full Moon can make you distracted and, hence, accident-prone.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You might feel undecided about financial matters. You feel pulled in opposite directions. After Wednesday's Full Moon, you'll have more clarity about this area of your life.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Wednesday's Full moon is in your sign. As it approaches, you might feel increasing tension and emotional anxiety. Fortunately, after the Full Moon peaks, all this diminishes.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Don't be hasty to make judgments about coworkers now. The approaching Full Moon makes you feel vaguely irritable, and this simply clouds your thinking.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Parents must be increasingly patient with children because the Full Moon on Wednesday can create tension. This also applies to romantic relationships and anything having to do with professional sports.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Be patient with any tension that builds up in your family or your private life. This is just due to the pending Full Moon. It's a very short window of time. You can handle this.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Avoid religious or political arguments now because your emotions will get the better of you. After Wednesday's Full Moon, you'll be more inclined to live and let live.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): If you're confused about financial matters now, try not to act until after Wednesday's Full Moon. By Friday, you'll have much more clarity.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You definitely feel this approaching Full Moon, because it directly opposes your sign. It could create tension with partners and close friends. Be patient until it passes.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Don't make a big deal about things with coworkers. Try to relax more. Pamper yourself if you feel edgy and nervous about anything.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): If you need the cooperation of a friend or a member of a group, you might want to wait until Friday. Tension in this area will only increase as Wednesday's Full Moon approaches.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

	3						2	
6				9	3			4
		5	7	1		9		
	9		4		7	3		
	5	1				4	6	
		7	5		1		8	
		8		4	6	1		
7			3	2				5
	6						4	

Difficulty Level ★
1/01

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

3	1	6	5	4	8	7	9	2
4	9	7	6	2	1	3	8	5
5	2	8	9	7	3	1	6	4
7	5	2	1	3	9	8	4	6
9	6	3	8	5	4	2	1	7
1	8	4	7	6	2	9	5	3
6	3	9	4	1	7	5	2	8
2	4	1	3	8	5	6	7	9
8	7	5	2	9	6	4	3	1

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

2 artists celebrate year of hope and courage

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

SHE BEGAN HER JOURNEY WITH the unveiling of the commemorative centennial jewel, called "Journey of Hope," a stunning piece she created for the Centennial Gala, an event the Filipino-American community staged at the Westin St. Francis Hotel, San Francisco.

The featured designer is Marissa Gonzales, who prefers to sign her name MariGonz, herself an accomplished painter, who went out of her way to help commemorate 100 years of Filipino migration to the United States. She is also the featured artist at the Asian Art Museum, which previously had such national icons as Juan Luna, Fernando Amorsolo and Fernando Zobel gracing its opening exhibit. Her work explores the theme of diaspora and the pursuit of identity, as her seminal work "Pilipinas Kong Mahal" symbolizes.

MariGonz' art career is subsumed to her work as jeweler, which she claims enables her clients to wax nostalgic for things dear to them: family solidarity, love of country, faith in a Supreme Being.

Working in a photo-realist style, she lets her paintings express the hopes and dreams of Filipinos everywhere. There is the queen gem, the diamond, to glorify the contribution of Filipinos to their host country and to the rest of the world as well.

The blue sapphires represent the bodies of water Filipinos crossed and left behind to come to the New World. The precious rubies stand for the Filipino's bravery amid uncertainties, the emeralds in the golden state and the solid gold for the firm foundation and stability as well.

The jewels she created became the archetype for the giant *parols* the lantern-makers of San Fernando, Pampanga, created for the Frisco Christmas. The multi-faceted *parols*—product of Filipino ingenuity and innovation—were displayed around the business area of the Serra Monte Mall in Frisco. Like the jewels and the paintings she created, the lanterns are a unifying symbol of the brilliance and munificence of God's celestial creations.

Romeo Gutierrez

Over at The Fort, an exhibit at Le Soufflé Restaurant by veteran painter Romeo Gutierrez also shone during the Christmas holidays. The artist celebrated the themes close to the Filipino: family, reunion and togetherness, returning to one's roots.

Departing from his more rigid forms, not to mention his trademark hues, Gutierrez had new inspiration to work on, particularly after a year of being on his own, a most trying period in his life that he has come to terms with.

The pieces have an overwhelming sense of gaiety unusual in the artist's terra firma. The geometrical forms are neatly layered, their sense of rhythm spiritedly musical and almost Zen-like in their composition.

The textures, subtly applied but moving and dynamic, are well-orchestrated by their creator, an element that is in total harmony with the overall scheme.

The artist, now in his 60s, seems to have been finally released from his comfort zone, unleashing a flurry of new ideas and concepts. This is, in art lingo, a period of introspection, a time when all of us will do well to engage in as the world is a breath away from the new year.

Looking back at the past, we are better assured of what the future holds for us, or, better still, of what we shall make out of the present.

E-mail author a gdormiendo@yahoo.com.

THE GUESTS of honor at Rellie Liwag's (third from left) first solo exhibit "Faces, Bodies & Places" at Galerie Joaquin include (from left) Kakai Arroyo, Cebu Mayor Tommy Osmena; artists Gig de Pio and Andi Cubi, mentors of the artist; Francisco Alba, former ambassador to the Vatican; Pete Jimenez, the artist's son Mike. The show was curated by Gino Dormiendo.

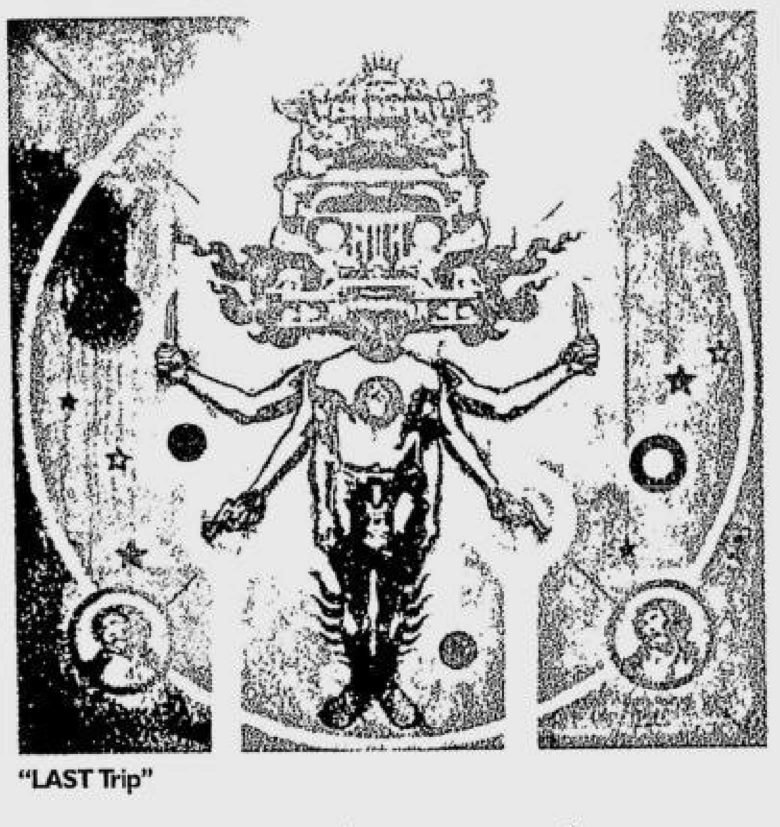
IKA-2 BANAT
flickristas@the_jewellery
A PHOTO EXHIBIT
The Jewellery

Photo exhibit at Greenhills

THE JEWELLERY GALLERY ON THE SECond floor of Greenhills Shopping Center is holding "Ikalawang Banat; Flickristas@The Jewellery," a photo exhibit. The photos cover life studies, nature, urbanscape and still life. The photographers are members of flickr.com, a photo-sharing site owned by Yahoo!. The show runs until Dec. 31.

Jail minors' art

THE CULTURAL CENTER OF THE PHILIPpines presents "Symphony in J Minor: Interactions with Minors from Jail" until Jan. 14. The exhibit showcases the product of an art-therapy workshop conducted by Dennis Miguel for young detainees at the city jail in November 2004. These are expressions of young artists' fears, hopes and dreams. Their other works were also exhibited at the Manila City Jail, University of Santo Tomas' Beato Angelico Gallery and the GSIS Museum. Call 8323702.



"LAST Trip"

Wesley Valenzuela's iconoclasm . . .

From page C8

capitalism: He guns down master narratives that have been held sacred with narratives of his own, manufacturing personal cosmologies through hybridization that fit his consumerist taste or mind-set.

The betrayal occurs here, in the tale of the murdered icon inscribed upon another icon waiting to be killed, which is his own painted mandala. No wonder Shiva appears to be wearing shoes designed by Vans with multiple squares: The ideally symmetrical shape evokes eternal sameness and endless reproduction.

It equally comes as no surprise that the third canvas is "Untitled," for this third space of hybridity—neither simply East nor West—is still waiting to be named. And probably for good measure, too, for the very act of naming contributes to an object's inflexibility.

To baptize is to give essence, identity, to give it the parameters within which it can move without compromising its constructed nature; and by virtue of its unbaptized namelessness, this untitled mandala is free to allow the once-native *bul'ul* to stick out its consumerist eye and voyeuristically stare at the crotch of a new female divinity, sitting on the head of the sacred lion, her Macintosh heart floating in her objectified chest and by her feet the flaming skull of punks, bearded bikers, and possibly (comically) even Ghost Rider.

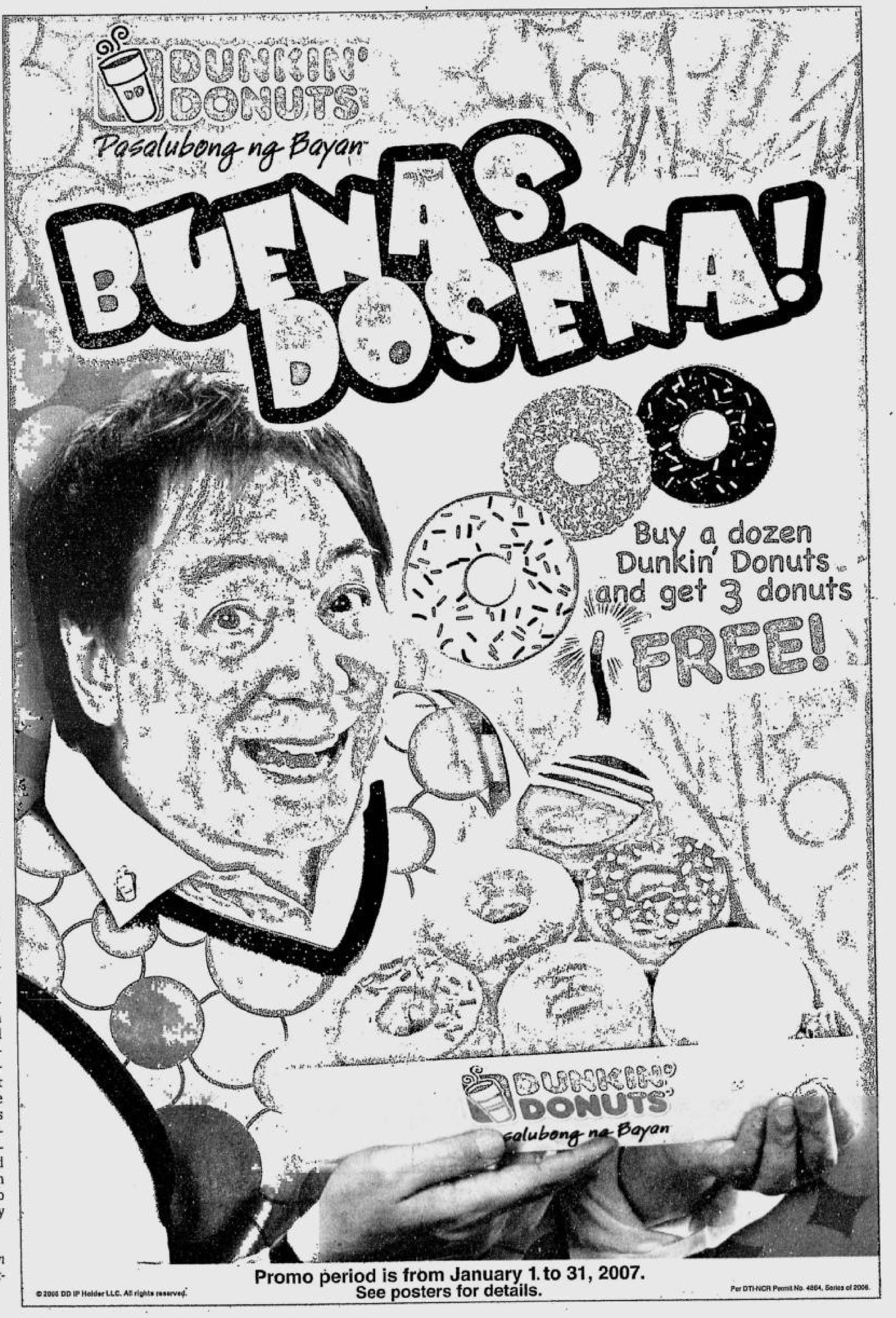
The dream of smashing old symmetries is more dramatically, though less subtly, visualized in "Wrath of the Gods," in which a woman riding a gun to the right of the lengthwise painting shoots the circular mandala on the left, the letters D-E-S-T-R-O-Y spread across the canvas.

That the side of the gun typographically alludes to popular culture via the infamous Nora Aunor declaration *"Walang himala!"* denotes not so much a loss of institutional belief, but rather the transfer of belief to and in a different institution, which is possibly the capitalist church of the consumer, a synagogue whose wallpaper is cash.

The spread elegantly punctuates the cultural/economic issues raised by the artist, thanks to the impetus of rising forms of hybridity, both critiqued and embodied by the show.

Valenzuela himself demonstrates hybridity by showcasing in his fourth show not just technical skill but critical acumen as well, revealing painting to be a highly vigorous site of visual discourse. But in spite of all the questions the show has raised whether in terms of ideology or consumerism, "Urban Apocalypse" is, in the end, really a question of faith: Christ and capital, belief and betrayal, icon and the loss of referentiality—do you really completely buy into any just one of that?

"Urban Apocalypse" is ongoing in The Big & Small Art Co. at the Artwalk, L/4, Bldg. A, SM Megamall.



Promo period is from January 1 to 31, 2007.
See posters for details.
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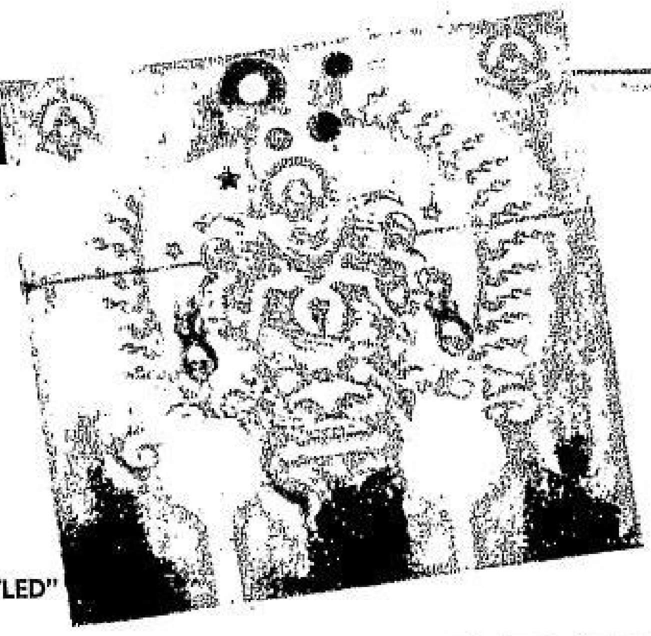
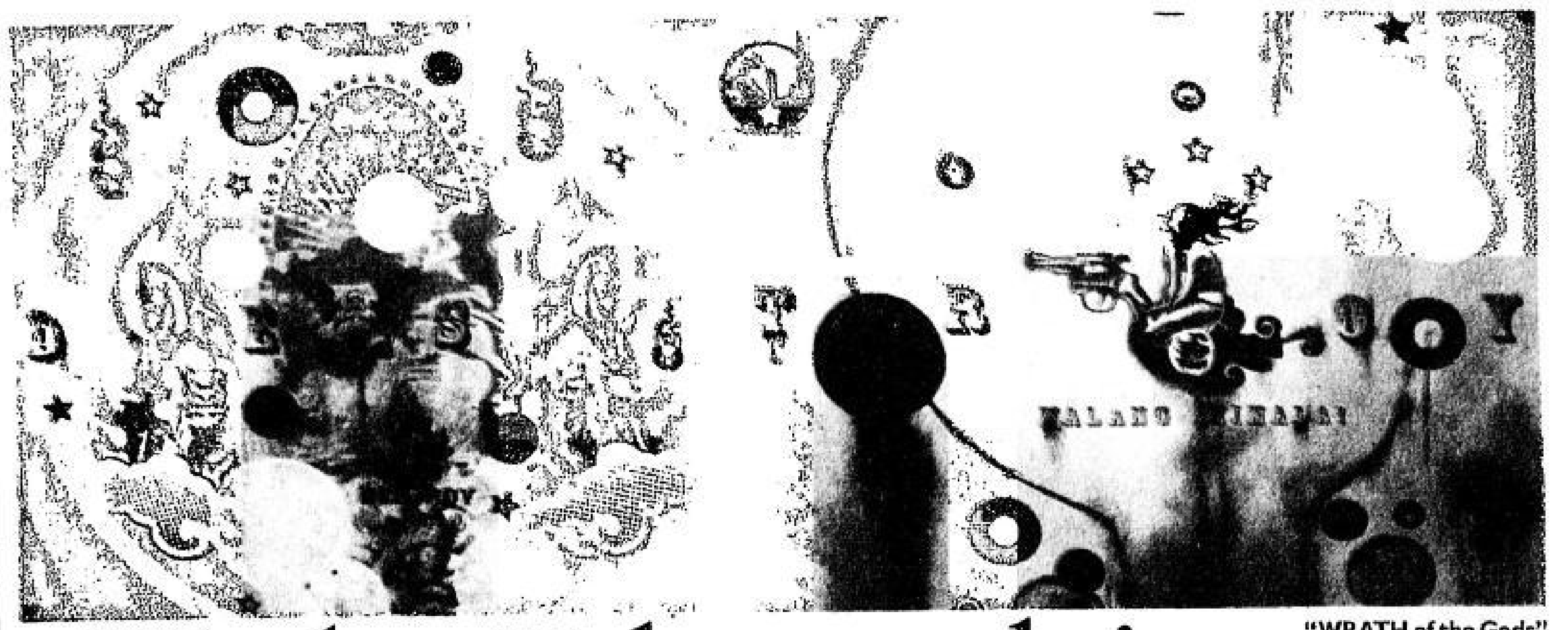


"UNTITLED"



"WRATH of the Gods"

Wesley Valenzuela's iconoclasm in late capitalism

By Angelo V. Suárez
Contributor

SOME SAY THE THIRD TIME'S A charm but we say it's the fourth: Wesley Valenzuela's fourth one-man show, "Urban Apocalypse," not only charms but is itself a set of charms—as if every huge canvas was a wall-based amulet, each of the appropriately four paintings encapsulating one letter from the Tetragrammaton, in pagan-Christian counterpoint. Or not so much amulets but mandalas, what with three of them overtly exhibiting symmetry, whose gray drabnesses evoke the newspaper texture they're painted on.

Christmas and capital

That there is balance implies there are oppositions to be balanced: Could it be mere coincidence that "Urban Apocalypse" in its metropolitan madness runs the span of the holiday season—Christmas recollecting one such peaceful pastoral portrait as the Nativity—or does it set the show's true context?

One almost sees the Holy Infant in "Of Machines and Men," around His head a halo of flame, grown-up though shaven and crowned not with thorns but sweatbands, the mark on His chest making Him a veritable Jesus Christ Superstar.

At the center of His torso is a levitating beer bottle, and from the sides of His pelvis run monster tanks with the emblem of the Eye—a mass-produced icon of God's omniscience—or, shall we say, of multinational companies, the gods of capitalism, voyeuristic in their knowledge of consumerist habits?

The plump stormtrooper floating in repose at the foot of the figure yields no response, uncaring yet serene in lotus position, at once an allusion to "Star Wars" and a telling paradox of the soldier of Zen.

The theme of dichotomy gets complicated when man and machine constitute a hybrid in "Last Trip," the second word of the title a double-edged sword as it evokes "trip" as both physical jaunt and psychedelic high (dichotomy of mind and body): At the core of the canvas is the urbanite Shiva holding guns and knives, on his chest a visible grayscale heart, the head a horrible jeepney whose wheels are on fire.

The hybridity is cultural; the jeepney alone—the military remains of American colonial rule (pioneers of capital) appropriated by us as Pinoy vehicle for transport—is a collision of East and West. Because mandalas are usually graphic devices used in Eastern spiritual traditions, their accommodation of Western iconography, particularly on this canvas, echoes the explosion of the same cultural collision.

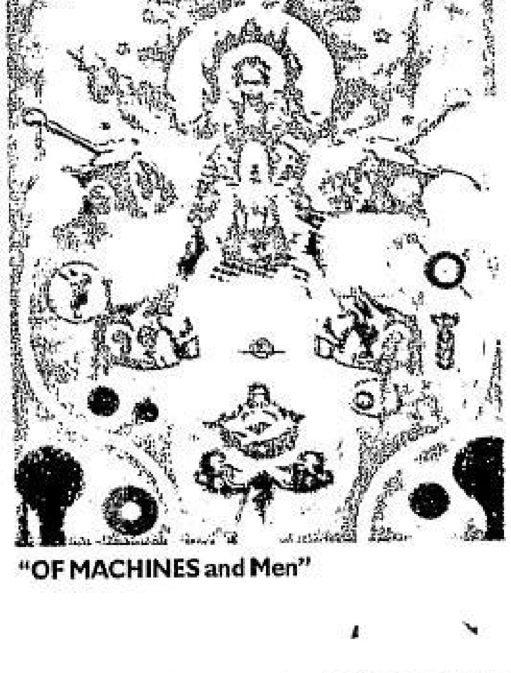
But this isn't so much an accidental collision as a deliberate one, reeking almost of murder: With both guns aimed at another familiar Western religious image, Shiva appears bent on shooting at the mass-produced faces of the divine supplicant savior.

The painting seems to ask: Could Christmas be the story of Christ's last trip—the birth not of the iconic Jesus but the icon of Jesus, a memorial in text to an already dead God? The narrativization of Christ marks His unreality: That his truth is embedded in story—or in icon as visual text or tale—makes him susceptible not only to multiple interpretations but endless deconstruction as well.

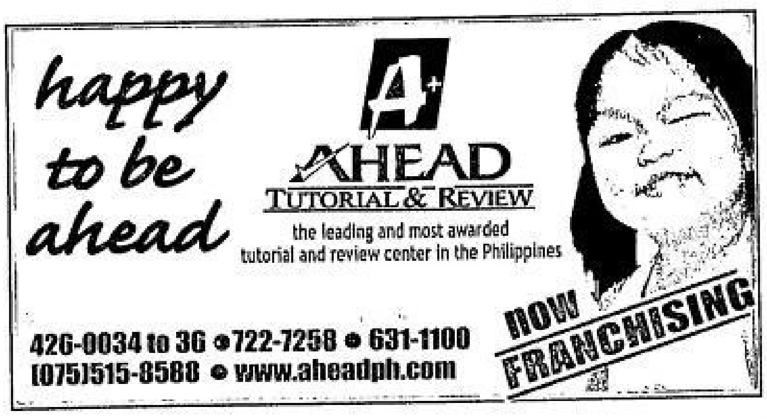
Belief and betrayal

This is what constitutes the traitorous irony of Valenzuela's iconoclasm in the age of late

WESLEY/ C7



"OF MACHINES and Men"



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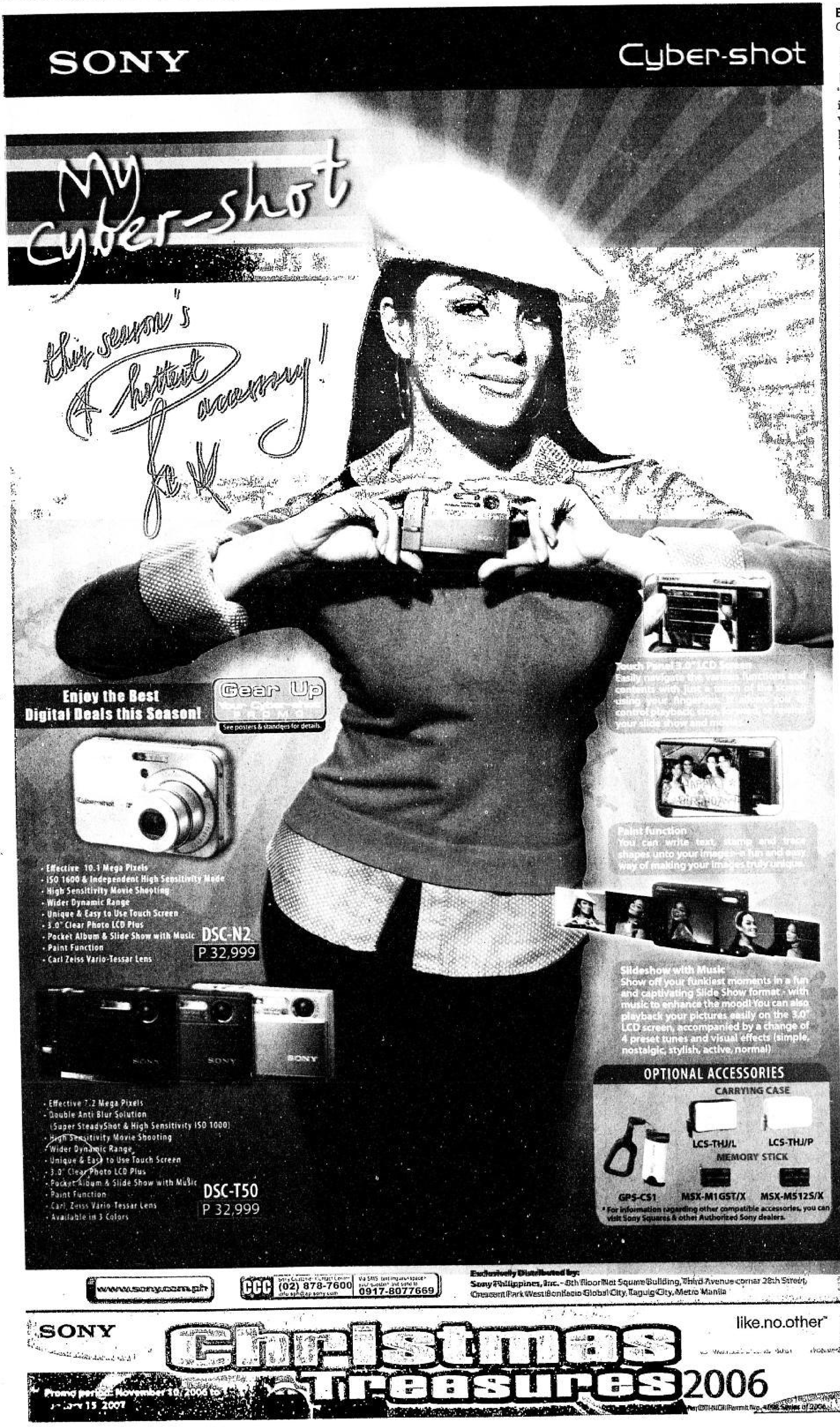

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LIFESTYLE

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THE CAST of Tanghalang Pilipino's "Bakeretta," with playwright/director Chong Wishing (in white shirt)

Best shows of the last quarter of 2006

By Amadis Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

THERE ARE NOW MORE INtimate, smaller venues for the performing arts which serve as an alternative to the behemoth that is the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Count among these the Vibal Publishing Art Center (Araneta Avenue, QC), where the high priestess of the music is Esther Vibal; Heritage House (Blue Ridge, QC), where the *babaylan* is environmentalist soiree organizer Odette Benito Alcantara; the Francisco Santiago Hall (PCIB-Equitable, Mkt); and even the Philamlife Theater in Manila, which antedates the CCP.

At the Vibal Penthouse Theater, veteran tenor Francisco Aseniero, battling fever and a cold, nevertheless gave a creditable performance, while young and saucy soprano Anna Feleo belted out arias from "Carmen." A few days later, the two went on a tour of Europe with other members of Klasiko Filipino: pianists Reynaldo Reyes and Tessie Ruutu.

At Heritage House, the Serenata Singers and the Harana Boys of humanities professor Jun M. de Leon serenaded guests at a soiree, with baritone par excellence Alex Bite (pronounced Bee-te) on the guitar.

TENOR Jun Peñaverde

Also performing in this and other venues were the busy trio of young operatic singers associated with *walang kupas* pianist Julie Mendoza: bel canto tenor Jun Peñaverde (fresh from Chianti, Italy); belter-tenor Dondi Ong (fresh from the UP College of Music); and ingénue soprano Alexis Edralin (fresh from Silangan Hall, CCP).

They even performed at Paco Park (in one concert, young saxophonist. Timmy Cheng, 13, almost stole the show), and at the commemorative dinner-concert of my Ateneo de Manila High School Class (Batch 19-forgotten) at the Manila Golf Club, along with the Ateneo Alumni Glee Club.

Speaking of alma maters, the alumni (some of them coming from abroad) of the Philippines High School for the Arts in Mt. Makiling, Laguna, gave a touchingly successful concert (at the Francisco Santiago Hall) to raise funds for their school, which was severely damaged by super typhoon Milenyo.

At the Francisco Santiago Hall, pianist Jonathan Arevalo Coo (who also sang in the opera "Eugene Onegin") and soprano Joana Go essayed a delightful romp ("meandering") through the music of Mozart, one of the many tributes here and abroad to the supremely great Austrian composer on his 250th birth anniversary.

The University of Santo Tomas Conservatory of Music's "Eugene Onegin" lived up to its hype, and was a memorable production.

World-caliber soprano Rachelle Gerodias and the rest of the cast proved that they can emote as well as sing (in Russian, at that). Baritone Andrew Fernando was vocally impressive as Eugene but physically did not look the part, being rotund. To top it all, he was made to wear a wig that did not become him.

Tchaikovsky's music was not at par with his great compositions for the ballet and his symphonies.

"don_Q," a presentation of Peta (Philippine Educational Theater Association) and the Metropolitan Teen Theater League, in cooperation with the Spanish Program for Cultural Cooperation, was a rather far-out variation on a theme by Cervantes, and often mystifying to the oldies not familiar with computer games; it's a good thing the audience was 99.9 percent students.

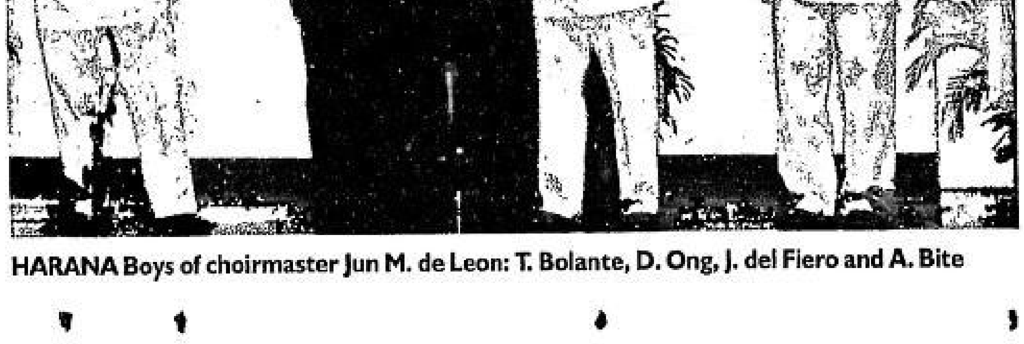
The play, directed with brio by Chris Millado, was a telling social commentary on the current Filipino diaspora, as Pinoys continue to seek a better life abroad, sometimes at great cost (as in separated families and failed marriages). The characters moved around like robots; there must be a lesson here for the youth who are spellbound by computer games.

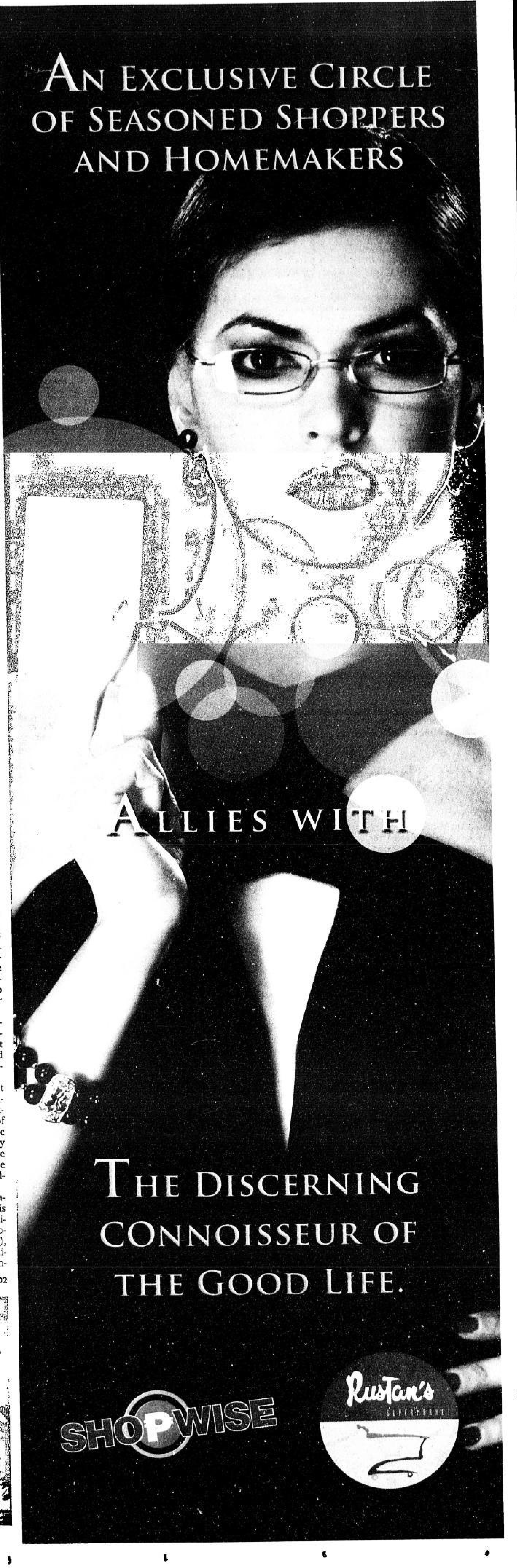
The musicality of prettily plump Lea Salonga, now more mature because of motherhood, was evident during the benefit concert ("Tomorrow," at the CCP) for traumatized children. And—surprise!—she now sings Filipino songs beautifully.

The soloists at the Toyota 2006 Classics (at the CCP)—Filipino pianist Jovianny Emmanuel Cruz and Japanese flutist Ayoko Takagi—were technically brilliant. Orchestra (of Japan), under the baton of the charismatic Tatsuta Shimono, no longer having to play second fiddle (pun not intended) to the soloists, really cut loose, brought the house down, and brought the audiences (from Balcony 2 to orchestra) to their feet.

Cebu-born pianist Albert Tiu (now Singapore-based), in Mandarin attire, proved his mastery of the keyboard again with a rendition of Rachmaninoff's challenging "Rhapsody on a Theme" by Paganini (at the CCP), with the formidable composer-conductor Chino Toledo directing the Metro Manila Com-

BEST/ D2


HARANA Boys of choirmaster Jun M. de Leon: T. Bolante, D. Ong, J. del Fiero and A. Bite



Home for the arts and culture in Cagayan de Oro

By Neil Pagalaran
Contributor

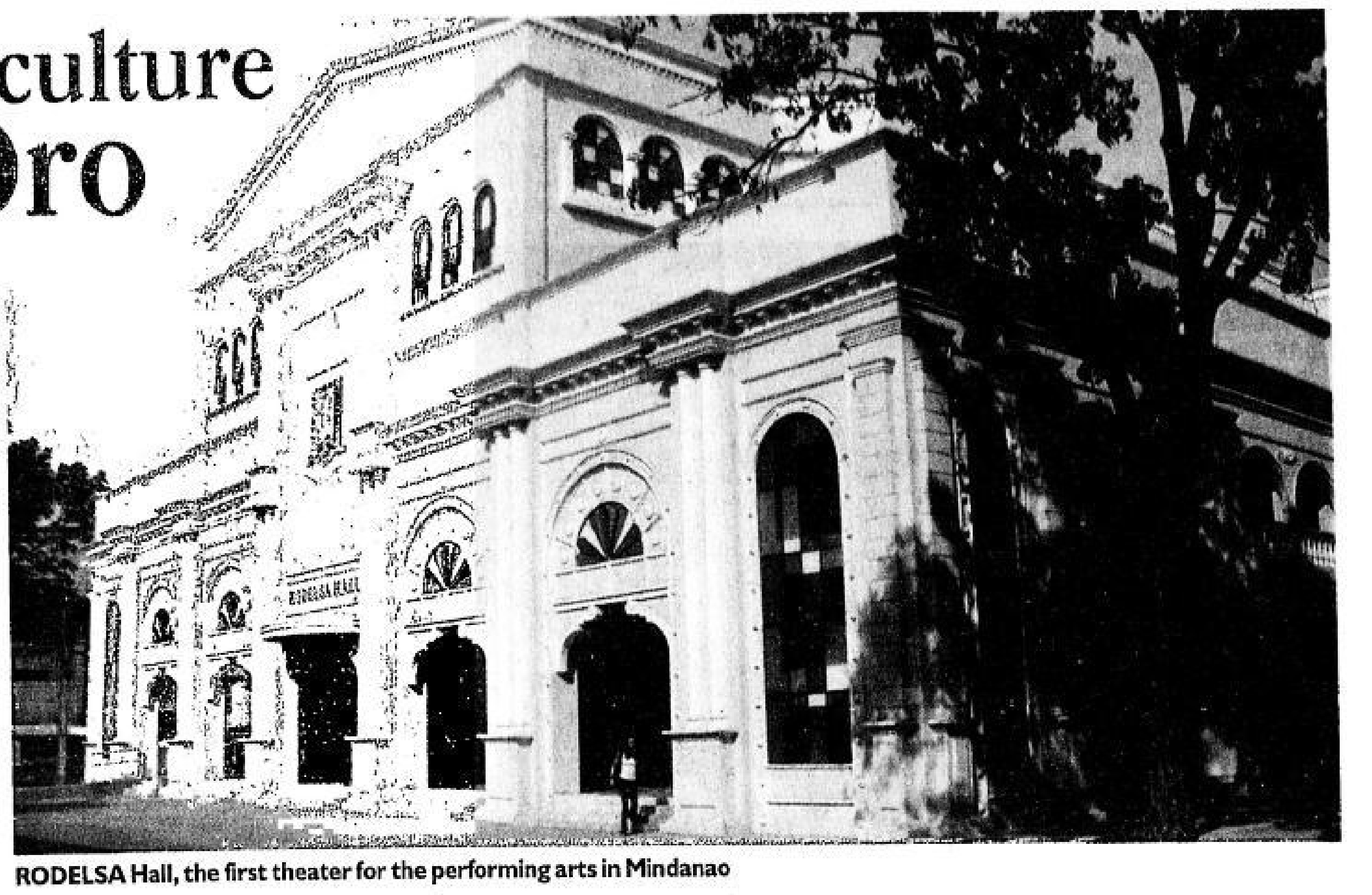
WHEN THE PHILIPPINE Army decided to hold the annual National Philippine Army ROTC Speech Contest outside Metro Manila for the first time ever, they chose to hold it at Rodelsa Hall of Liceo de Cagayan University in Cagayan de Oro City.

"Outside Metro Manila, your theater impressed us with its world-class and high-tech facilities and services," declared Major Ted Dumpit, the Arescom Technical Officer who served as the Production Director for the ROTC Speech Contest.

Thirteen contestants representing the various regions throughout the country converged in Cagayan de Oro a few days ago for the prestigious competition. Cadette Oliva B. Caspe, a 19-year-old BS Elementary Education undergraduate at the Eastern Samar State University, emerged as the competition's champion.

Second place went to Cadet Edward Brian Kene S. Morales, a nursing student at the Davao Oriental State College of Science and Technology. Third placer was Cadet Aldrin John Rabayari, a BS Accountancy major at the University of Southern Mindanao in Kabacan, Cotabato.

PERFORMANCES galore. A string quartet serenades theatergoers on opening night.


RODELSA Hall, the first theater for the performing arts in Mindanao

The contestants were hosted by Maj. Gen. Jose T. Barbieto, commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division at Camp General Edilberto Evangelista in Barangay Patag.

Welcoming the military presence at Rodelsa Hall, university president Rafaelita Pelaez-Golez said, "This occasion is special for two reasons. It is the first time this event is held outside Metro Manila. And it is the first time Rodelsa Hall is hosting a speech contest."

For his part, Brig. Gen. Emmanuel S. Cayton averred, "We are proud to partner with Liceo de Cagayan University, an important institution in Mindanao, for this event. This venue is perfect."

Liceo U. inaugurated Rodelsa Hall—named after Rodolfo Pelaez and wife Elsa, the university's founders—in February 2005 to mark the university's 50th Foundation Day.

And in such a short span of time it has staged an exciting mix of performances, from the daring "Vagina Monologues" (V-Day 2005) to the spellbinding solo concert of the Spanish classical guitarist Jorge Orozco (in cooperation with Instituto Cervantes through a grant from the Spanish government); the World Festival of Drama Schools workshop and performance of the delegation from Romania, and the British

Council tour of "All in the Timing" was presented by the internationally acclaimed comedy theater group Peepolykus (pronounced "People like us").

And there were piano concerts by the likes of Ingrid Sala Santamaria and Reynaldo Reyes (in their world tour of the 10th Romantic Piano Concerto Journey); Jovianney Emmanuel Cruz, and Rudolf Caesar Pelaez Golez (the Julliard-trained prizewinner of the international Chopin competition in Kuala Lumpur in 2004).

Of course, there are the family-oriented musicals, like "The King and I," "The Sound of Music," and, recently, "Cinderella"—all directed by the world-class Benjie Diola.

ART patrons. National Artist Napoleon Abueva (leftmost) poses before his bronze sculpture of Rodolfo and Elsa Pelaez, the founders of Liceo U., together with their heirs Tanya, Alain, Graziella, university president Rafaelita Pelaez-Golez, and Rudolf.

Showcase

Cutting the ribbon during the inauguration of Rodelsa Hall were Nestor O. Jardin, president of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, and Sala Santamaria, the acclaimed pianist from Cebu—together with Pelaez-Golez, who decided to build the theater to showcase her commitment to culture and the arts.

"With Rodelsa Hall, we want to cultivate a culture of theater-going in the Cagayan de Oro community," said Mozart Pastrano, founding artistic director and general manager of Rodelsa Hall.

Rodelsa Hall is a fully air-conditioned, state-of-the-art theater with 700 plush seats. It has become the venue of choice for music concerts, theater productions and dance presentations.

In fact, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, in cooperation with Mowelfund, Inc. and the Cagayan de Oro Cultural Action Program, had decided to hold the Pelikula at Lipunan 2005 film festival for Mindanao at Rodelsa Hall.

Rodelsa Hall has also been handpicked for chi-chi corporate events, such as the National Sales Convention of Avon, Inc.

Landmark

The main entrance of Rodelsa Hall is on Rodolfo N. Pelaez Street in the Carmen district of Cagayan de Oro City. It is a majestic architectural landmark in soothing earth-yellow, which perks up the front façade of Liceo U.

The lobby is flanked by two grand staircases resplendent in its Italian marble finish. Clinching it all is an impressive chandelier designed just for the lobby.

At the top of the stairs is the theater foyer, where four doors beckon you inside the theater. Restrooms are available at the right side of the foyer and the uppermost area inside the theater.

The seats inside the theater are divided into two main areas: the orchestra, which has 224 seats; and the lower and upper loge areas, which boast 498 seats.

The theater has permanently installed lighting and sound systems, which are manned by a full-time technical crew. There are facilities for flown scenery: six free battens, which make possible the "magic" of changing scenery. A valence curtain, when unfolded down, becomes a natural sound reverberation medium.

The backstage area has a green room, male and female dressing rooms, male and female restrooms and a piano room. The control room at the upper reaches of the audience area, a restricted zone, allows for state-of-the-art theater operations.

The theater management, including the front-of-house operations, is under the Office of Cultural and Public Affairs, Liceo de Cagayan University, Carmen, Cagayan de Oro City 9000. Tel: 63/88-8584093 to 95 Local 249. E-mail: rodelsahall@yahoo.com.

Best shows of the last quarter . . .

From page D1

munity Orchestra.

Wild applause greeted the soloists, musical director and orchestra.

First presented decades ago by Fr. James Reuter at St. Paul College Manila, Rodgers & Hammerstein's "The Sound of Music," with its appealing love story and glorious music, still enchants. This was evident in the Repertory Philippines production at Greenbelt Onstage, directed by Baby Barredo, with a cast of veteran and new talents, including coloratura Fame Flores, 16, an aspiring opera star who will be featured in "Paco Park Presents" in January.

Tenor Randy Gilongo, who was a big hit as the doomed Lenski in "Eugene Onegin," followed up his success with a recital at the CCP's Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino, interpreting demanding and unfamiliar arias which explored his range, further staking this claim as one of the country's finest tenors, and building up a coterie of screaming females fans.

Collaborating artist Peter Porticos, pianist, put up a show of his own (but without eclipsing the singer).

Another group which stages regular quality concerts at the Francisco Santiago Hall is the Clarion Chamber Ensemble (headed by David J. Johnson), which in November presented great baroque music (Bach, Handel, Scarlatti). Keep an eye on young trumpeter Raymond de Leon, who plays with supreme confidence; he will go places.

SERENATA Singers: Sol Peñaverde, Jun Peñaverde, Alexis Edralin, Dondi Ong, Rama Cabreza, Roger Peñaverde, Nene Cristobal

At the Teatrino in Greenhills, seven members of the Philippine Opera Company (Nolyn Cabahug, John Glen Gaerlan, Elver Esquivel, Nenen Espina, Karla Gutierrez, the winsome Lina McKenzie and Jennifer Uy) let their collective hair down ("Opera Lite"), and indulged in campy, *kabaklaan* humor (with Floy Quintos as director), delivered spiels in English and Tagalog, and spoofed selected songs .

The swishy Esquivel and Espina are adept at comedy, and provided much of the laughs.

By mid-December, the POC had recovered some of its poise and (at the CCP's Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino) came out with an adaptation in English of Mozart's "The Magic Flute" for children (actually it was first performed at the Paskuhan Village, Pampanga), with spoken dialogue and music, and directed by Kokoy Jimenez.

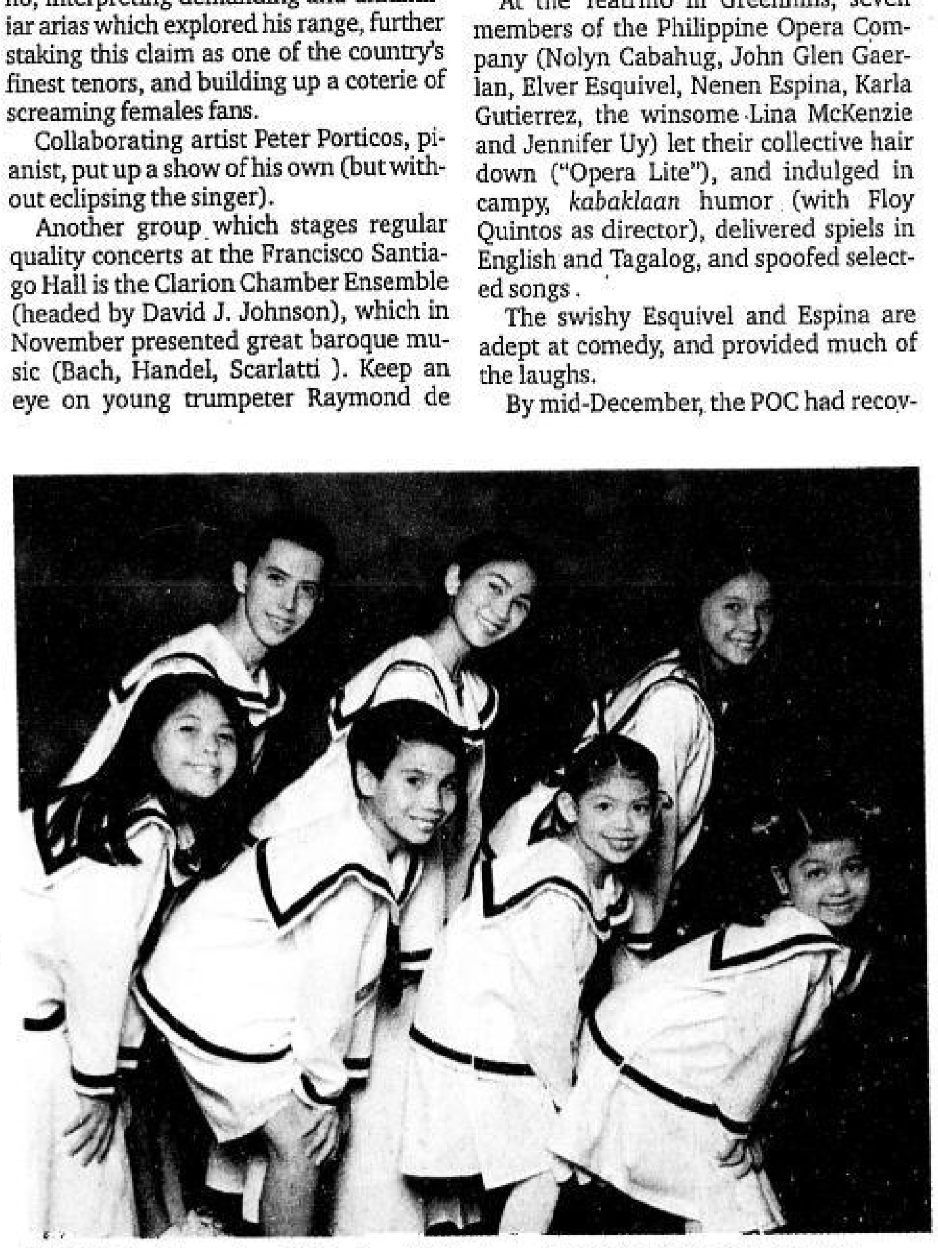
The kids will like this production, with its set and animal designs by Gino Gonzales, plus the antics of the dragon (Jay Barrameda) and Papageno (Bodgie Pascua). The complementing film (with 2-D animation by Nick Barrameda) enhanced the show.

At the CCP's Tanghalang Huseng Batute, the laugh-out comedy and affecting drama "Bakeretta (Ghost Operetta),"directed by the playwright himself, Chong Wishing of Japan, depicted the travails and conflicts smoldering within theater life.

Ensemble acting was terrific, with bravura performances all around, especially by Mailes Kanapi. But the triad of youths in schoolboy uniform—Nicco Manalo, Nar Cabico and Leo Ponseca elicited the loudest applause because of their comic and musical ability.

Iloilo-born Otoniel Gonzaga is the third finest tenor in the world today, after Pavarroti and Domingo (Carreras can be the fourth). This was demonstrated anew in Gonzaga's December concert at Philamlife Theater, which also featured virtuoso singing from sopranos Rachelle Gerodias and Camille Lopez, and pop star Dulce, whose voice is mezzo. Another special guest was flutist Christopher Oracion, with Rodel Colmenar conducting the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra.

There were more musical events than straight plays and dance presentations during the fourth quarter, if not the year. And this only underscores the Pinoy's natural predilection for music, especially vocal music, although s/he may also be highly skilled in acting and dancing.


THE KIDS of Repertory Philippines' "The Sound of Music," directed by Baby Barredo

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JUNO Henares

CATHY Azanza

REP celebrates 40th year

REPERTORY PHILIPPINES FOUNDATION, Inc. celebrates its 40th year of continuous production with the opening of its 70th season of plays Jan. 12, at OnStage Theater in Greenbelt 1 in Makati.

Founded in 1967 by the late Zeneida Amador, Baby Barredo, Leo Martinez and the late Tony Mercado and his wife Monina, REP is the oldest professional community theater company producing Western plays in English.

REP celebrates the first half of the year with a season of three unusual comedies and a modern musical. "Moose Murders," a mystery farce by Frank Rich, has been dubbed by its director Michael Williams as an outrageous comedy that was written ahead of its time. It features popular theater actors Ana Bitong, Miguel Faustmann, Cathy Azanza, Jay Glorioso, Juno Henares, Jamie Wilson and a host of others. It opens Jan. 12.

"Song and Dance" by Andrew Lloyd Webber is a two-part theatrical concert. In the first part, "Tell Me On A Sunday," a young woman sings about living in New York City. Part two, "Variations" is a dance concert where a young man and his friends tell their story through virtuoso jazz dancing. It opens Feb. 9, 2007.

Opening Mar. 16, 2007 is "Gay Birds," an adaptation (in English) of Jean Poiret's "La Cage Aux Folles." The straight son of a gay couple brings his fiancee and her conservative parents to meet his parents who also happen to own a nightclub called "La Cage Aux Folles."

"Glorious," written by Peter Quilter, is based on the true-life story of Florence Foster Jenkins, an opera singer, who was called "the master of the sliding scale" because of her inability to hit correct notes but whose concerts became annual, sold-out, New York happenings. This uproarious event opens April 13, 2007.

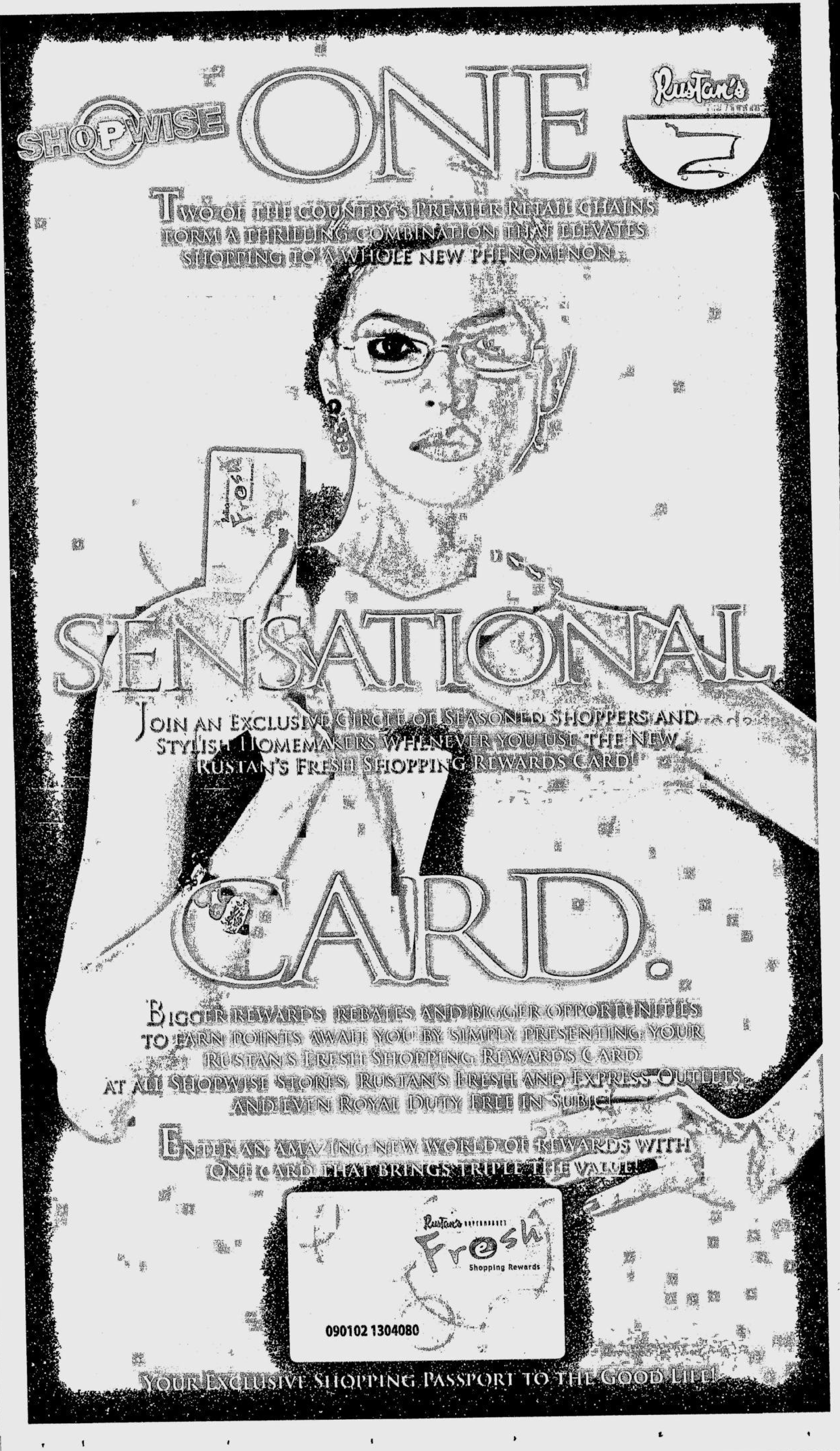
Season Tickets at P1,800 and P1,200 for all four plays are on sale at the REP office at C2-A Bldg. C Karrivin Plaza 2316 Pasong Tamo Extension, Makati. They may also be mailed to interested persons by calling 8870710 or Ticketworld at 8919999.

Visit www.repertory-philippines.com or request for a brochure at the above number.

Special out-of-season productions for this anniversary year are Disney's "Cinderella" (Kids) opening in August, Shakespeare's "Love's Labours Lost" opening in September and "Fiddler on the Roof" as REP's 40th anniversary big musical celebration opening in November. All productions are to be held at Onstage in Greenbelt 1 in Makati. All plays are in English and are available for performance and advertising sponsorships and group sales.

JAMIE Wilson

ANA Bitong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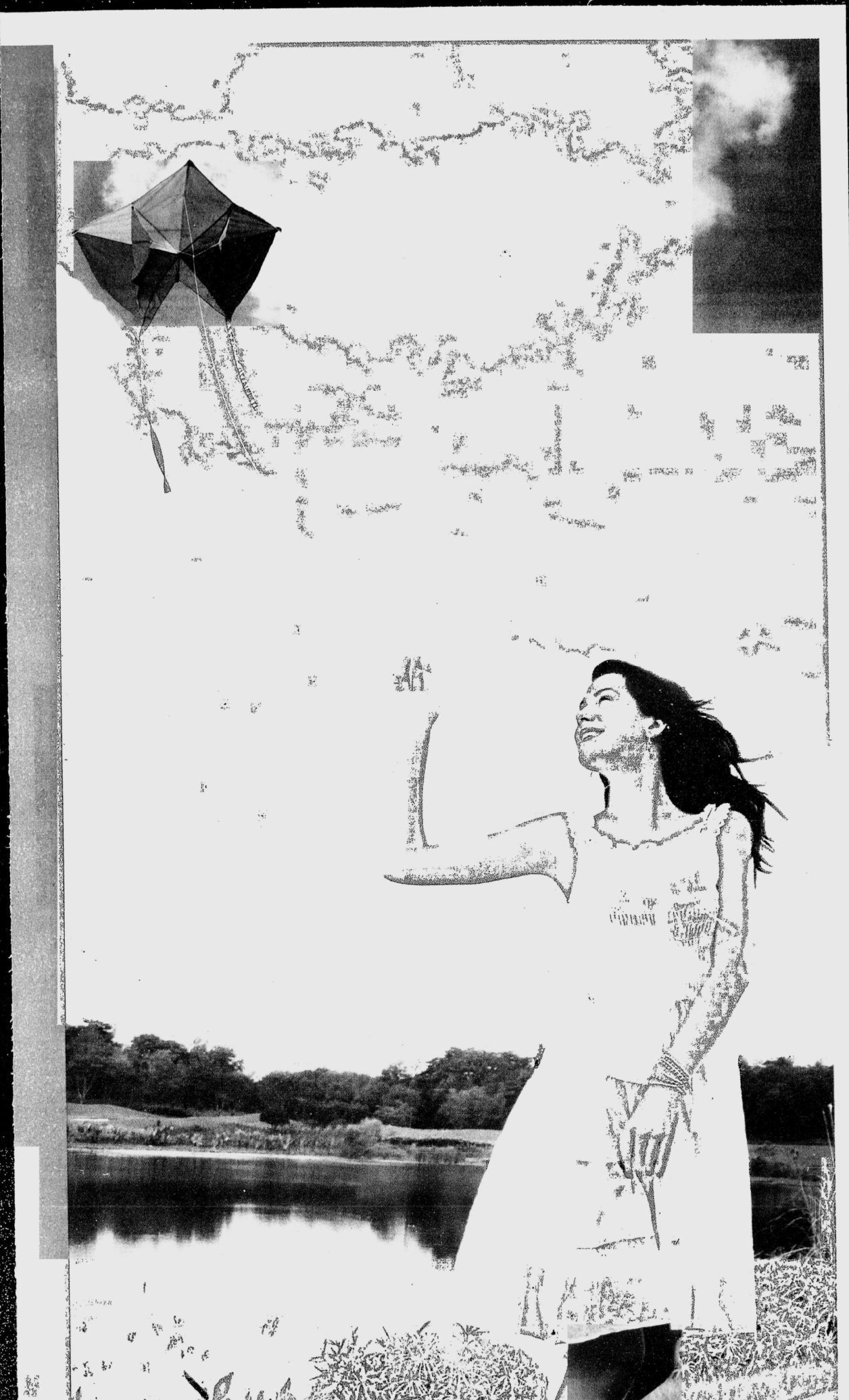
1 MOMENT 1 NESCAFÉ



BARANGAY Aquino came without Noynoy. Viel A. Dee, Cory Aquino, Kris Aquino, Ballsy A. Cruz and Pinky A. Abellada

BARANGAY Magsanoc came in full force except for Dr. Marty Magsanoc, who was in the US at the time. Dondi Alikpala and wife Kara with daughter Ariana; Letty Jimenez Magsanoc with Micha and Banana (front); Dr. Carlos Magsanoc with Monica, Gina and hubby, Dr. Niko Magsanoc

Memorable night with Asian pantheon of heroes

Text and photos
by Mandy Navasero

TIME MAGAZINE SAID IT ALL when it gave homage to the 60 remarkable men and women who made up Asia's "astonishing array of heroes."

Time acknowledged it was privileged to have met "the most exceptional of them—on the campaign trail, in the boardroom and the research lab, on the factory floor and the film set." In following these remarkable individuals, Time said, "we have told the story of Asia's transformation from poverty to powerhouse, from imitator to imitated, from being colonized to leading the global economy in a new era."

As a roving photographer with the Mr. and Ms. Special Edition in the 1980s, I also had the privilege of having met Cory Aquino "on the campaign trail" and later, in Malacañang from 1986-1992. The icon of Filipino People Power, Tita Cory led the "array of heroes" that Time Asia honored in a gala dinner at the Grand Ballroom of the Ritz-Carlton in Hong Kong recently.

As a certified Cory fan, I could not help but gush at the sight of Tita Cory, resplendent in a bright-red gown and surrounded by her four lovely, photogenic daughters Ballsy, Viel, Pinky and Kris. The gracious Aquino women have been the subject of my camera through the years.

Of course, there were media icons Eugenia "Tita Eggie" Apostol and Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc, INQUIRER founding chair and INQUIRER editor in chief, respectively, who were also among the 60 Asian heroes feted that night.

EUGENIA Duran-Apostol, Efren "Bata" Reyes, Cory Aquino and Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc, four Asian heroes from the Philippines

In 1983, Tita Eggie ruffled the Marcos-controlled media when she published the Mr. and Ms. Special Edition, a black-and-white pullout from her regular glossy women's magazine, Mr. & Ms., and had the pages of the magazines splashed with photos of Ninoy Aquino's funeral and the succeeding street protests against the Marcos regime. The editor in chief was her friend and kindred spirit, Letty Magsanoc.

Apostol's tabloid dared where other media feared to tread—that is, cover the news that Marcos did not want reported. The funny thing was that Apostol and Magsanoc were not even "militants" or "political activists."

In accepting the honor bestowed by Time Asia, Magsanoc simply expressed her thanks to Time Asia and her family, which included siblings scattered in the United States. "I wanted to show the Philippine diaspora," she would later tell me.

Apostol, for her part, feigned she had nothing more to say, after Magsanoc had used up their allotted time of two minutes. That elicited some chuckles from the audience.

Billiards superstar Efren "Bata" Reyes Jr. won even more plaudits with his folksy mien. When he asked "Why me?" after accepting the honor bestowed by Time Asia, not a few sighed over the man's childlike simplicity. As one of the Time executives told me, Reyes was a unanimous choice of the jurors. Not only because they loved billiards, but that Reyes also embodied the "odds-defying ability of a poor Pinoy to parlay hard work, skill and guile into fame, fortune and respect."

All in all, it was a memorable night with Asia's living heroes.

Tribute to National Artist for Dance Ramon Obusan

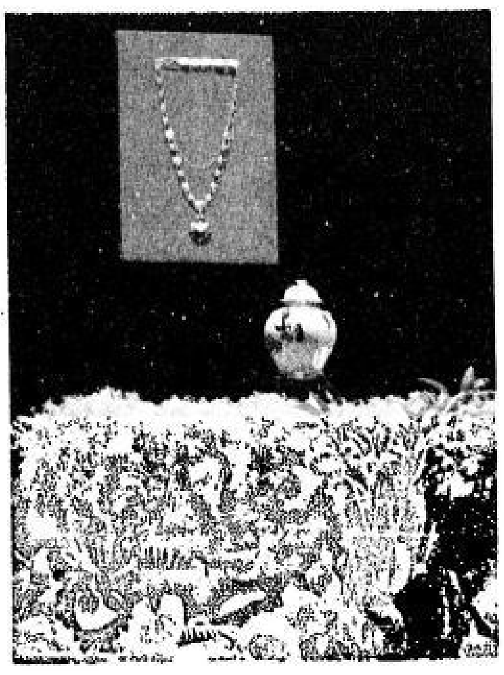
NATIONAL Artist for Film Eddie Romero pays tribute to Obusan.

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION for Culture and the Arts and the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) paid tribute to National Artist for Dance Ramon Obusan in necrological rites on Dec. 28 at the CCP Main Theater. Obusan, 68, succumbed to cardio-pulmonary arrest on Dec. 21.

Obusan was the founder of the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group, which earned fame and distinction for its fidelity and authenticity in presenting Filipino traditional dances. The country's national artists, dancers, cultural workers, diplomatic corps and relatives attended the state funeral.

The remains of Obusan were laid to rest at the Manila Memorial Park.

OBUSAN'S kin carry his urn to the CCP.



OBUSAN'S urn

UST hosts international conference on history of medicine

THE MIGUEL DE BENAVIDES (CENTRAL Library) of the University of Santo Tomas is holding the First International Conference on the History of Medicine in the Philippines on Jan. 9 and 10 at the Antonio Vivencio del Rosario Heritage Section of the library, UST campus, España, Manila.

Organized with the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, the conference is convened by Fr. Angel Aparicio, O.P., UST prefect of libraries, and Dr. Raquel Reyes of the British Academy of Postdoctoral Fellows and the Department of Southeast Asia and the Islands of the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London.

The conference seeks to tap the library and archives of UST, which houses one of the richest collections of books and manuscripts on the history of medicine in the country.

Despite the availability of resources, the history of medicine in the Philippines is a neglected field of study. The conference, the convenors said, aims to bring together for the first time a diverse range of health-science professionals, scholars, archivists and librarians to explore the history of medicine in the Philippines from the 16th-20th century.

Speakers include Prof. Peter Boomgaard of the Royal Netherlands Institute for the Study of Southeast Asia and the Carribean ("Writing Medical Histories in Southeast Asia: Comparative Approaches to Disease, Health and Healing"); Dr. Racquel A.G. Reyes ("Philippine Medical History: A Survey of the Field"); Fr. Angel Aparicio, O.P. ("Bibliography of Medical Books Existing at the UST Miguel de Benavides Library [Before 1945]"); Prof. Juan O. Mesquida of the University of Asia and the Pacific ("The Misericordia of Manila: Founder and Patron of the Hospital of San Juan de Dios"); Fr. Lucio Gutierrez, O.P., historian ("San Gabriel, Hospital de Chinos, Founded by the Dominicans"); Fr. Fidel Villarroel, O.P., UST archivist ("Origin of the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery and the Faculty of Pharmacy");

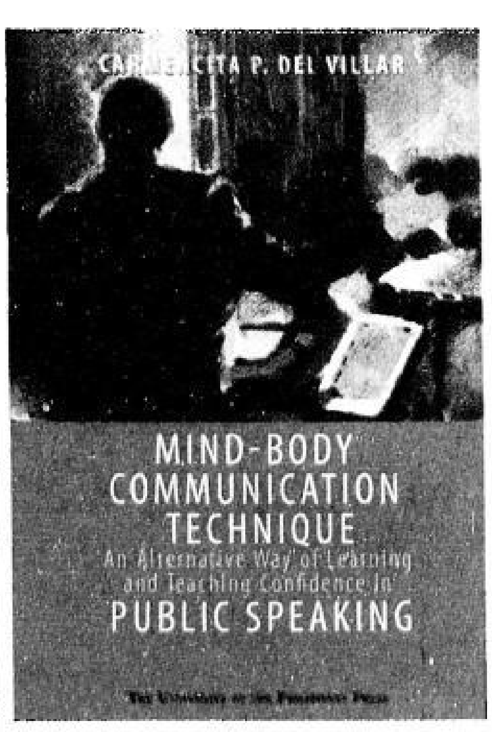
Dr. Norberto V. Martinez of the Department of Otorhinolaryngology of UST Medicine ("The Licensure Curricula of the First Period of the UST Faculty of Medicine"); Dr. Artemio T. Ordinario of UST Medicine ("The Doctoral Curricula of the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery Before the Japanese Occupation"); Dr. Mary Jean Villa-Real-Guno of the Department of General Pediatrics, Pediatric Gastroentorology and Nutrition of the UST Hospital ("The First Faculty Members of the University of Santo Tomas Faculty of Medicine and Surgery"); Dr..Gil Gonzalez of UST Medicine ("The First Graduates of the UST Faculty of Medicine: Their Impact on Medicine in the Philippines");

Prof. Linda Newson of King's College, London ("Spanish Medical Practice in the Early Colonial Philippines: Contexts and Prospects"); Dr. Raquel Reyes ("Women in the Torrid Zone: Jose de Vera's 'Vida Genital de la Mujer Filipina'"); and Dr. Angeles Tan-Alora of UST Medicine ("Some Notes on Cholera and Leprosy in the Philippines").

The keynote will be delivered by Health Secretary Francisco Duque III. UST Rector Magnificus Fr. Ernesto Arceo, O.P., will give a special message.

Conference fee is P1,000. Call the UST Miguel de Benavides Library (7313034; 4061611 local 8234); or UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery (7415314; 4061611 local 8239).

New book on public speaking



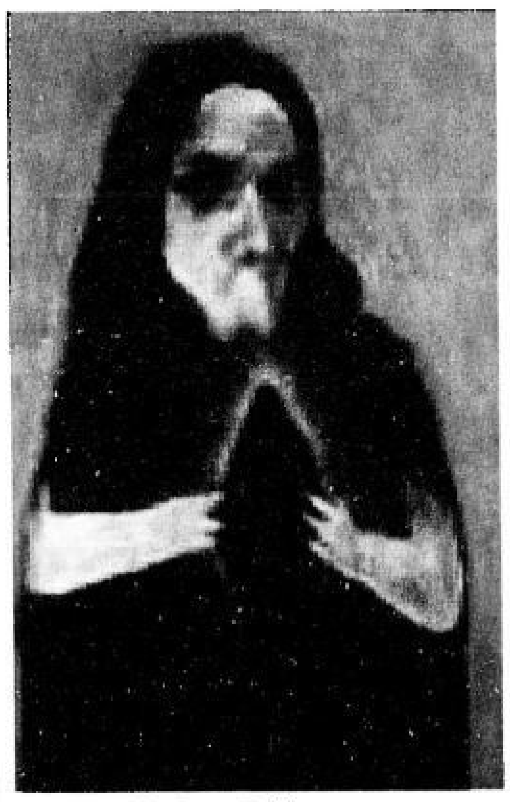
CARMENCITA P. DEL VILLAR'S "Mind-Body Communication Technique" is off the press.

Published by the University of the Philippines Press, the book is subtitled "An Alternative Way of Learning and Teaching Confidence in Public Speaking" and is a useful reference book for teachers helping students conquer their communication fears and build their confidence.

The book provides steps that the teacher can use to help students in any oral communication or performance classes. The steps are the result of years of successful experimentations by the author with non-traditional teaching techniques.

The book is also useful for classes on acting for stage and television, broadcasting, music, dance, sports and marketing.

The author is a member of the Department of Speech Communication and Theater Arts of the College of Arts and Letters of UP Diliman.



ARTWORK by Buen Calubayan

Poets and visual artists collaborate in exhibit at Beato Angelico

THE GAP BETWEEN THE LITERARY AND THE VISUAL arts is a gaping wound, and as such needs to be healed. As a step toward complete recuperation and Wagner's dream of the Gesamtkunstwerk or total art, young visual and literary artists on the uprise from the University of Santo Tomas come together in the landmark collaborative show, "Langib," as an attempt to form an artistic scab to patch up the damage.

Some of the artists paired to collaborate on verbo-visual works are Mark Magistrado and Nerisa Guevara, Buen Calubayan and Angelo Suarez, Mark Salvatus and Glenn Atanacio, Jay Pacena and Natasha Gamalinda, Lawrence Borsoto and Rosmon Tuazon, Constantino Zicarelli and Czeriza Valencia, Ivan Roxas and Karen Capco, and Rainier Cruz and Cholo Goitia.

"Langib: a literary + visual arts exhibit" opens with readings and performances on Jan. 5, 6 p.m., at the Beato Angelico Gallery (College of Fine Arts and Design building) of UST, and will run until Jan. 20. Call Jay Pacena (0915-7810135) or Angelo Suarez (0916-3839418).

Music lovers' choice for 2006

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

FROM EUPHORIC AUDIENCE feedback, musicians' reactions, and the media's reception, it looks like the Pianist of the Year is 22-year-old Russian Ilya Rashkovskiy, prizewinner of the First Hong Kong International Piano Competition and the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition in Paris.

Piano connoisseurs are one in saying that his rendering of Mozart's Fantasy in C Minor, KV 475, was astounding; his interpretation of Schubert's "Wanderer" Fantasy in C Major was beyond words. And all the way to the Scriabin, Chopin, Liszt and Balakirev fantasy pieces, Rashkovskiy revealed not just ravishing technique but also a lot of heart. Piano fans nearly caused a riot backstage at Philamlife, competing for the pianist's autograph.

The first time I heard it live, I thought the Andrea Chenier duet of tenor Otoniel Gonzaga and soprano Camille Lopez Molina with the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra under Rodel Colmenar had eclipsed everything I heard in other venues during the year.

"Oh Holy Night!" as performed by Gonzaga is the Christmas Carol of the Year.

PIANIST Ilya Rashkovskiy

RASHKOVSKIY signing autographs

LAKAMBINI Zaguirre Ramos

JOSÉ Mari Chan

For bringing classical music not just in schools, shopping malls in Manila and the provinces, the Music Missionaries of the Year are pianists Ingrid Sala Santamaria and Reynaldo Reyes.

Coo at Equitable

Not to be missed during the week is the solo recital of cellist Victor Michael Coo at Equitable PCI Bank's Francisco Santiago Hall on Thursday, Jan. 4, 8 p.m. This is the same cellist who got a standing ovation at the Philamlife the other year after a performance of the Dvorak cello concerto with the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra under Colmenar. For tickets, call 9007023 or 0906-5104270.

On Friday, Jan. 5, US-based Filipino pianist Lakambini Zaguirre Ramos will team up with José Mari Chan at the Meralco Theater in a special fundraising concert of the Dominican Sisters of the Regina Rosarri, which spearheads the Tuesday Feed Program for street families living in pushcarts. For tickets, call 3725327 or 0919-2694286.

'After Aida'

The music-related play not to be missed is Julian Mitchell's "After Aida" to be staged at the Teatrino on Saturday, Jan. 13. Directed by Jaime del Mundo, "After Aida" features Paul Holme as Giuseppi Verdi, Bart Guingona as Arrigo Boito, Enchang Kaimo as Verdi's wife Giussepina Strepponi, Del Mundo as Julio Ricordi and Robbie Guevarra as Franco Faccio.

Interpreting Verdi arias are sopranos Rachelle Gerodias and Nenen Espina, tenors Ronan Ferrer and Randy Gilongo, baritone Noel Azcona with pianist Mary Anne Espina. For tickets, call 9007023 or 0906-5104270.

Diaz opens eighth solo exhibit

ARTIST JR Diaz, Kaye Nuguid, Robert Yupangco, Priza Cinco, Alex Alcantara, owner of Heritage Art Center, and Lina Siccion

JR DIAZ'S EIGHTH SOLO EXHIBIT, "Summer and Autumn, Cherished Seasons," recently opened at Heritage Art Center in SM Megamall.

Inspired by nature's fascinating paradoxes—powerful yet fragile, fleeting yet constant—Diaz presented 24 new oil and acrylic paintings of key Philippine tourist destinations, as well as vivid impressions of the summer and autumn seasons in Canada and the United States.

Diaz also tackled timeless themes: a mother sweetly bonding with her child; a still life of fruit and wine; mango vendors with their bright golden harvest; and musicians at a serenade.

Leading the well-wishers were social welfare secretary Esperanza Cabral, Rep. Cynthia Villar, Rep. Emily Lopez; Nini Teves, wife of finance secretary Gary Teves; Rep. Pedro Pancho, and Rep. Mitos Magsaysay.

Other guests were Rene Diaz, presidential assistant for Central Luzon; former public works secretary Ping de Jesus, now president of Manila North Tollways Corp.; former tourism secretaries Narzalina Lim and Gemma Cruz Araneta; architect Jun Palafox of Palafox Associates; and artist William Yu.

RENE Diaz, R. Kawaguchi of Marubeni, the artist, Cecile Diaz and Gemma Cruz Araneta

WYHAN Candelaria, Michael and Cristina Hinlo, Celeste Candelaria

GUIMARAS Rep. Emily Lopez, Social Welfare Sec. Esperanza Cabral, Diaz, Rep. Cynthia Villar, Nini Teves; (back row) Cecile and Rene Diaz, presidential assistant for Central Luzon; former tourism secretary Gemma Cruz Araneta; urban planner Jun Palafox; Rep. Mitos Magsaysay and Rep. Pedro Pancho

FORMER tourism secretary Narzalina Lim, Teves, Lopez, Cabral, Carol Cunningham; (standing) Ludwig Rieder, Palafox, Villar, Cecile Diaz, Coralee and Kevin Murphy

Opera of the year

From page D8

tos' direction was aimed at clarity, given the fact that they opted for a no-subtitles production. His approach was geared toward maximum effect from subtle projections.

This heightened each scene even more than its original capacity to communicate certain meanings or emotions if florid gestures were employed. It was an intelligent decision to actually temper this aspect of an otherwise evident repository of the popular Russian hyperbole.

The two other creative forces behind this production, who each left no less than a mark of erudition, were Gino Gonzales and Monino Duque.

Gonzales' set design was minimal but not exactly minimalist. His visual representations efficiently held together the essential elements of place—geographically and atmospherically—and spatial distribution. He went beyond tradition though kept its certainty; he's a step behind postmodernism but alluded to it with enough restraint.

Duque's lighting for "Eugene Onégin" was pure poetry. The basis for all superlatives basically lay on the texture it added to the highly charged parts of the opera, particularly in the letter and duel scenes. Light is the truest metaphor in any visual construct. With his work, the extra-textual came out beautifully and with an intensity which could have been lost otherwise, if not for the man's brilliant eye.

"Eugene Onégin," in the beginning, might have appeared too overwhelming for quite a number of first-timers, but the UST production was admirable. Ultimately, with all the hype on high art and its conceptual babble, what matters is that it comes across.

We realize in the end that this opera happened in real time, that it could have been the story of no one in particular and everyone in general, that we do understand these things more than we ever hoped to imagine. And in the poet Yevtushenko's words, everything's just as simple: "In any man who dies there dies with him/ his first snow and kiss and fight./ It goes with him."

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'EUGENE ONÉGIN'

Opera of the year

THE DUEL scene in Tchaikovsky's "Eugene Onégin"

The UST Conservatory of Music's production of Tchaikovsky's opera was a tour de force

By Allan Pastrana
Contributor

THE PHILIPPINE PREMIER OF Tchaikovsky's opera "Eugene Onégin" was successfully staged by the University of Sto. Tomas Conservatory of Music in October at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. The event was the first of a series to mark the UST Quadricentennial in 2011 (UST was founded in 1911).

It was, indeed, a musical tour de force as the all-Thomasian cast was joined by the UST Symphony Orchestra, under the helm of Prof. Herminigildo Ranera and Coro Tomasino, as conducted by Prof. Ricardo Mazo Jr.

With four performances in three days, the production was one of the biggest risks of the institution to date.

There were initial misgivings as to the possible reception of the local audience to a Russian opera. It has always been easier to sell the idea of an Italian opera, both musically and conceptually. Since the inception of the "verismo" type, the musical form is expected to correspond to ordinary concerns and rely heavily on the motivations of realism to solicit a favorable response.

The matinee performance of the last day was well-attended—a good vantage point, if one may say, to assess the merits of an opera production. There is always a laid-back quality to most matinee shows (though it doesn't necessarily follow that the gala is better). But what would have been a lukewarm afternoon of Russian opera came across as an exciting revelation of talents, textures and whatnot.

A whole new breed of singers tackling a Russian masterpiece is an open-ended reality—probably not as harsh as the "make or break" principle for the actors, but more immediate like "received or deceived" for a trusting audience. The cast that afternoon was brilliant, by any standard worthy of admiration.

Noel Azcona's Onégin was a commanding figure. Both his physical presence and vocal projection were easy references for anyone to think the role was cut to fit him. One thing that's amazing about him is that he could shift from a full ringing quality to a brand of transparent lyricism without much effort. Such range of vocal color available to him made the character's journey from indifference to acknowledgement, from worldliness to deep awakening even more compelling.

Gilongo and Perez

Then there are major operatic characters whose emotional or psychological unfolding is slow or less evident than the others, or else is encapsulated in that one stakes-all-in of an aria. Take the slave girl Liu in Puccini's "Turandot," for example. Like her one chance to sweep audiences off their feet with "*Signore, ascolta,*" the poet Lenski is given that moment (or a fraction of it) to reflect on his mortality with "*Kuda, kuda, kuda vwi udalilis.*"

Randy Gilongo owned the stage during the entire span of his character's musings and beyond, even after he fell to the ground, after the terrible gloom of the second act's final scene gave way to the looming indifference and coldness of Russian aristocracy in the final act's opening scene. Gilongo's voice has always contained a recognizable nuance that clearly lends itself to dramatic resonance.

The most gratifying revelation though that afternoon was Thea Perez as Tatyana. One must remember that there is a more important consideration when judging a singer's success on handling a role vocally. It goes beyond range and quality, the way Verdi rejected the idea of picking just another beautiful voice to sing Lady Macbeth.

Perez's Tatyana was a luminous version. Her voice matched her subtle but undoubtedly effective acting. She worked her way through Tatyana's transformations with a transitional ease, giving the audience an accurate portrait of one of opera's most beloved heroines.

The rest of the cast was a gathering of excellent performers—Rexceluz Evangelista as Olga; Nenen Espina as Filippyevna; Patrice Pacis as Larina; Lemuel de la Cruz as Triquet; Jun Jaranilla as Gremin; Emmanuel Baang as Zaretsky and Aris Molina as the Captain.

Functional adjustments

For one, it was obvious at the onset how everybody involved made it possible for a non-Russian speaking (and, consequently, feeling) audience to trust them. The adjustments made were functional but never clinical. Floy Quin-

OPERA/ D7

TENORS Otoniel Gonzaga and Randy Gilongo

SOPRANO Thea Perez

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MAXIMUM EXPOSURE. From left, Itchyworms, Sugarfree and Imago.

YEAREND REPORT

Pinoy rock goes all the way pop

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

IN 2006, PINOY ROCK WENT ALL THE WAY pop.

Not only did many bands achieve mainstream popularity with wildly successful albums that even 7-year-olds could relate to; these bands were also given maximum exposure on broadcast media and embraced by the advertising industry.

For instance, it's now possible for a rock group like Kamikazee, known for rowdy live performances and a vocalist whose body is tattooed all over like a jailbird, to be cheered lustily on Sharon Cuneta's TV show. Plus, what was otherwise deemed incongruous sometime ago is now considered synergy at work: Kamikazee front man Jay Contreras, sweat dripping from his scary naked torso, singing the latest commercial jingle of an underarm deodorant.

KAMIKAZEE

It's perfectly all right these days for another group, the Itchyworms, to be a favorite TV guest—no matter if the entire content of its debut album, "Noontime Show," is a satire of television variety shows "Eat Bulaga," "Wowowee," "SOP" and "ASAP."

It looks customary as well for a beer company to sponsor a rock singing-talent search and have it aired on MTV, featuring such veteran yet unsung rock underground figures as Chickoy Pura and Jun Lopito, as lead juror and musical director, respectively.

Interconnected

For a new prime time TV drama series, or even a late-night newscast, to have the strongest audience impact, the norm these days is to have its theme/soundtrack written and recorded by rock bands as well.

And, by the way, it doesn't look embarrassing at all to hear a hyper-kinetic act like Bamboo turn an otherwise scriptural expression that means "Praise the Lord," into a street battle-cry for national unity: "Hallelujah!"

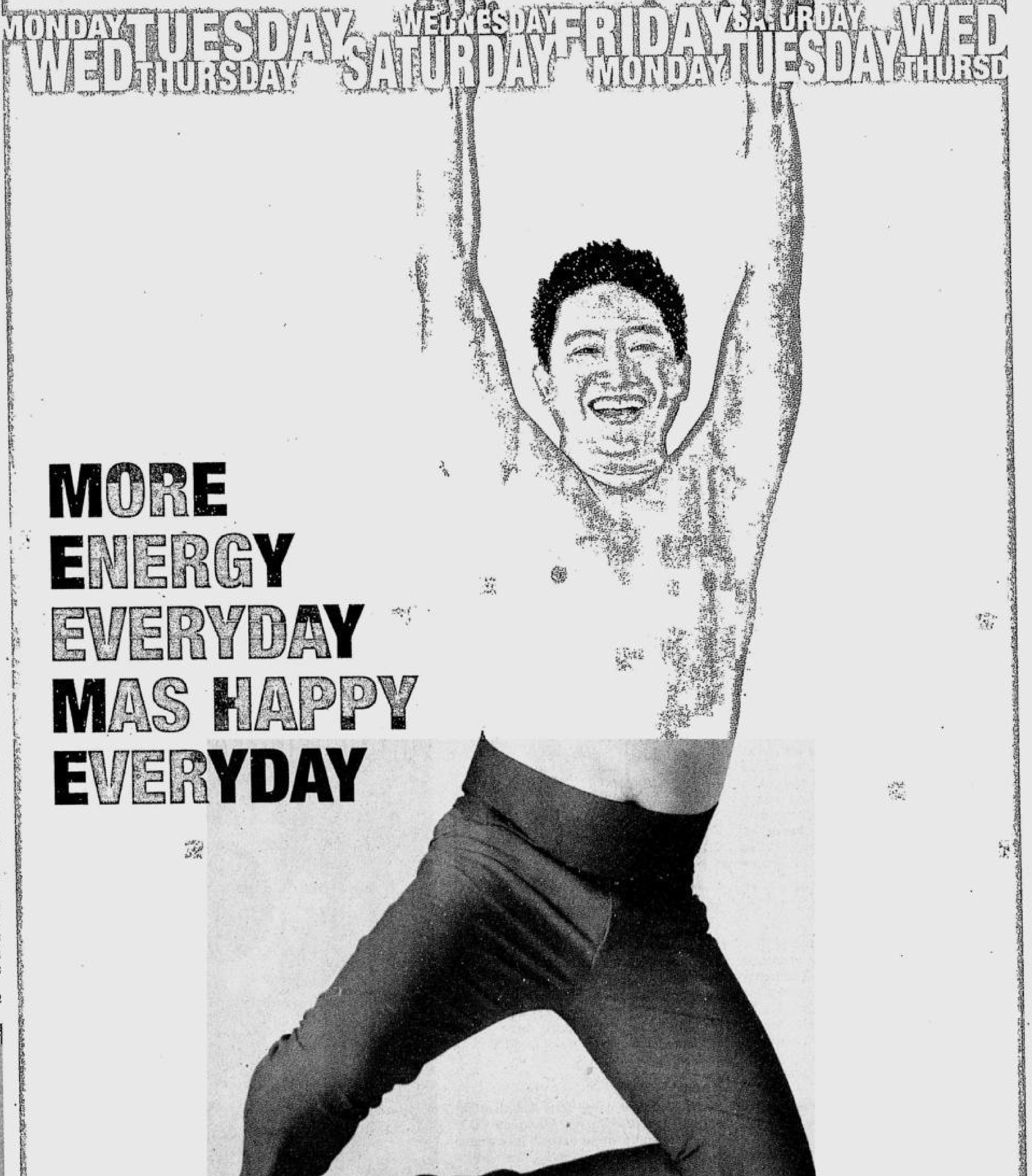
How and why did these things happen like they were all interconnected?

It's only logical to trace everything back to the phenomenon that was the Eraserheads. Remember that some five years after the rise of the Dawn, it was the E-heads that kicked the doors wide open for struggling musicians to snag a record deal and not follow the usual "image"-propped formula record executives

PINOY/ E2

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

RAIMUND Marasigan of Sandwich.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26 quotable quotes from 2006

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

THE YEAR 2007 HAS A NICE RING TO IT for both Kapamilya (ABS-CBN 2) and Kapuso (GMA 7) stars. This must be an indication that it will be a terrific year for both networks. It takes two to get to seventh heaven?

On Day One of the New Year, join me as I give a rundown of the 26 quotable quotes I gathered in 2006. Thank you, my loyal readers, for making "Dollywood" No. 1 on inq7.net's online survey all throughout '06. You all have a space in this column as well as in my heart.

•**AGA MUHLACH**: "The moment I got married, all the rules changed. I can't tell my spouse *na* 'Sorry *ganito nakasanayan ko nung* single *pa ko*.' When our kids grow up and have their own lives, *kaming dalawa lang ni* Charlene *ang magmamahalan so hindi ako dapat magmalaki sa kanya* ever."

•**GRETCHEN BARRETTO**: "I'm lucky I'm not back in show biz for the money [but] for my sense of fulfillment. Now I can savor it because it's not out of need but out of want."

•**ANGEL LOCSIN**: "Oyo Boy and I are so in love but it doesn't mean we will rush into marriage. People keep asking us about our wedding plans. *Masyadong kaming pinangungunahan, baka tuloy maudlot!*"

•**DIETHER OCAMPO**: "There are many new faces but that doesn't make me insecure. What counts is staying power, not instant fame!"

•**SAM MILBY**: "Honestly, I don't realize how famous they say I am. I hardly watch my shows and see my TV ads because I'm rarely home. I also don't see my billboards a lot because I'm usually asleep in the car. For me, it's all work. Fame just happens to be a bonus."

•**PIOLO PASCUAL**: "I never think that I'm better or more popular than my co-stars. We are all equal but not the same. *May sari-sariling* style *bawat artista*."

•**MARVIN AGUSTIN**: "It puzzles me how women seem so fragile but they can hurt men more than they realize it."

•**JOEY MARQUEZ**: "There are times I feel I love someone more than I loved the one who came before her. But with my children, I make sure they all feel loved equally."

•**GERALD ANDERSON**: "To make sure *di lumaki ang ulo ko*, I tell my family *na sabihan nila ako* if they notice any changes in my *ugali* that I may not be aware of."

•**AIZA SEGUERRA**: "For all the headaches I caused my mom, I'm willing to give her one *apo*."

•**TONI GONZAGA**: "I don't go out on dates. The guys linked to me are those I work with. *Di ko na tuloy alam* where work ends and love life begins!"

•**RUFFA GUTIERREZ**: "I think it's important to still have a life of your own even when you're already married. Marriage is no excuse to become fat, lazy and unproductive."

•**BEA ALONZO**: "Just because I decided to live on my own doesn't mean I'm rebelling. I still take care of my family. I just want to try to be independent but *hindi ako* liberated.

•**ZSA ZSA PADILLA**: "Have your fun while you're young. When you grow older, you can resort to plastic surgery to make up for your excesses."

•**POPS FERNANDEZ**: "Now that Martin has a new baby with Katrina, I guess it's our loyal fans who are more affected than I am. Martin and I will always be a tandem on stage but off-stage our fans have to stop nurturing the illusion that we'll still get back together."

•**DENNIS TRILLO**: "I don't believe in traditional courtship. It's too stiff. I'd rather befriend a girl and take things from there. No expectations... so nobody gets hurt."

•**JOLINA MAGDANGAL**: "*Alipin ako ng pag-ibig*!"

•**AI-AI DE LAS ALAS**: "*Nagugulat ang marami paano ako nagkakaroon ng* papa *na bagets. Kung iisipin mo nga naman, papunta pa lang ang mga bagets, eh, pabalik na ko. Swerte na lang nila nagkasalubong kami!*"

•**REGINE VELASQUEZ**: "I can't be singing forever but I'll grow old with music pa *rin* in my heart. That's why I put up Indi Music so I can help new singers reach those high notes and their dreams."

•**OGIE ALCASID**: "My wife and I have an understanding that's beyond understanding by other people. It's incomprehensible to them how our long-distance marriage works."

•**MIRIAM QUIAMBAO**: "To recover from my split-up with my husband does not mean I have to find a replacement... for him right away. Focusing on other things that I love to do, like charity work, soothes me. It's a different kind of love. The romantic kind can wait."

•**JOHN ESTRADA**: "I'm not a 24/7 dad so when I get a chance to be with my kids, I treat them like my *barkada lang*. But there are times I have to remind them that I'm the daddy *pa rin*."

•**CESAR MONTANO**: "When Sunshine and I are sweet, *sobrang* sweet. When we fight, feel *na* feel *din namin*! It's that intensity that keeps us together."

•**ALFRED VARGAS**: "I think it's healthy to feel jealous as long as it's just the right amount to keep things exciting between me and my GF."

•**POLO RAVALES**: "Even if you are not present always, *dapat pa*-feel *mo sa* GF *mo na walang iba*."

•**BIANCA GONZALES**: "Sometimes what feels good is not right for you. It's a tug-of-war between mind and heart. We all have to go through that to know what love really is."

E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com.

YEAREND REPORT

Pinoy rock goes all the way pop

It's only logical to trace everything back to the phenomenon that was the Eraserheads, who kicked the doors open for struggling musicians

From page E1

used to impose on artists to "please the market."

ORANGE and Lemons

Not only did the E-heads, followed closely by Parokya Ni Edgar, Rivermaya and, later, Bamboo, insist on appearing as themselves onstage and on TV, they also wrote songs about real life experiences that spoke to their generation. The result was a huge fan base that followed every stage of these bands' career. Many of the fans were so inspired that they themselves nurtured dreams of forming their own bands.

And they did.

Street-wise

Listen closely to Sugarfree and realize how Ebe Dancel seems to have absorbed Ely Buendia's storytelling skills. The Itchyworms, too, appear to have learned a lot from the humor-anchored music of Parokya. Put more street-wise edge to the humor and Kamikazee easily comes to mind. The list is quite long to mention here, but most probably you'll see them every week on TV.

What were some of the songs that had everyone from tiny tots to taxi drivers singing along?

One was Orange and Lemons' "Pinoy Ako," which of course benefited a lot from its being the soundtrack of a reality TV show. The song had a very infectious hook that pretty soon, the band was being accused of plagiarizing its melody from a foreign tune. The band's CD, "Strike Whilst the Iron Is Hot," would actually reveal more of its influences (Beatles, the Smiths and other British acts) in songs that the average Love Radio listener may not instantly identify with. But when it comes to writing TV themes and soundtracks, Orange and Lemons surely knows how to capture everyone's taste.

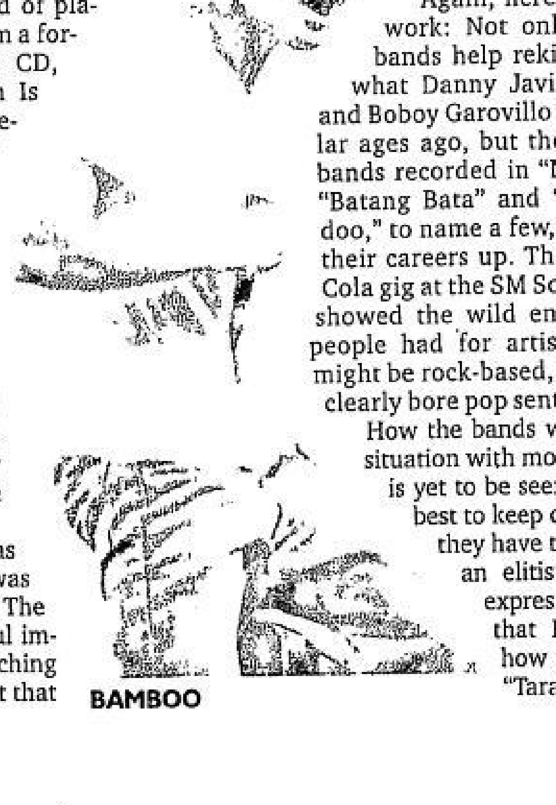
Another song that was on everybody's lips was Kamikazee's "Narda." The brilliance of its powerful images and heart-wrenching lyrics almost hid the fact that the song was indeed written with Angel Locsin in mind—specifically her character in a recent fantasy teleserye. The band's CD, "Maharot," contains more references to pop culture symbols, even as there are other tracks that emphasize Kamikazee's heavy metal leanings—but which are made palatable with fun-filled lyrics.

Synergy

What could be more fun-filled than the songs in "KaminAPOmuna," the tribute CD in which Universal Records hit the gold mine by gathering the hottest young bands to interpret the music of one of the most durable symbols of Pinoy pop, the Apo Hiking Society.

Again, here was synergy at work: Not only did the rock bands help rekindle interest in what Danny Javier, Jim Parades and Boboy Garovillo had made popular ages ago, but the versions these bands recorded in "Nakapagtataka," "Batang Bata" and "Doobeedoobeedoo," to name a few, actually pushed their careers up. The recent Sponge Cola gig at the SM Southmall Cinema showed the wild enthusiasm young people had for artists whose music might be rock-based, but whose lyrics clearly bore pop sentiments.

How the bands would exploit this situation with more positive results is yet to be seen. Meanwhile, it's best to keep checking out what they have to offer. To borrow an elitist college student expression from the '80s that Imago has somehow made more *masa*: "Taralets!"



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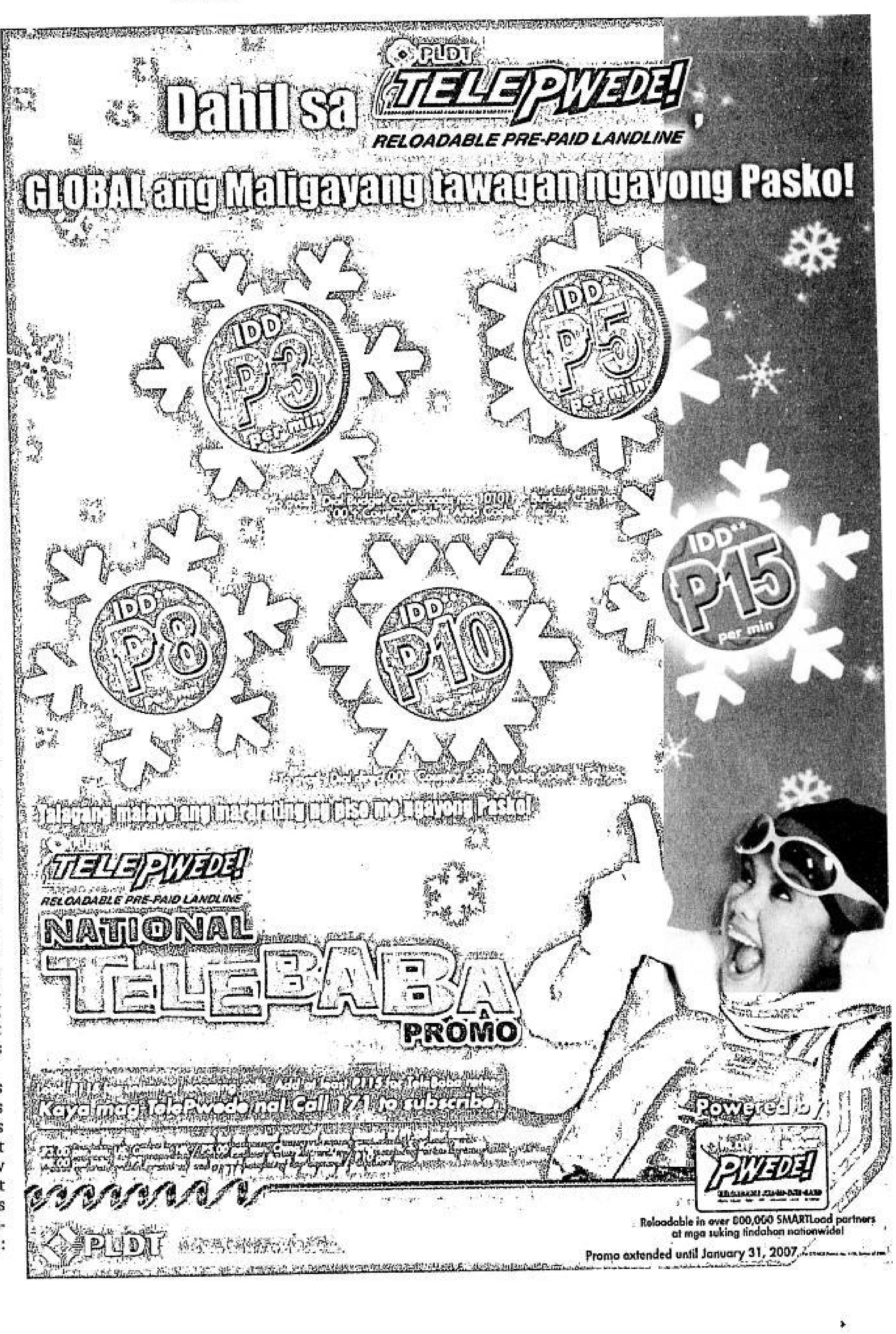
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Why some stars become directors

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

STARS LIVE A CHARMED LIFE. THEY'RE FAMOUS, make loads of money, are given special treatment, and get to play-act for millions to admire. So why would any show biz luminary choose to give up all those yummy goodies for the much tougher job of film directing?

It must be the chance to be in charge of *everything*, to see your totalized cinematic vision through, to speak in your own voice, instead of following somebody else's instructions.

The motivation's great, but a director's problems and challenges are many, so most stars prefer to stay out of the director's chair. However, some do go where stellar angels fear to tread, and a few of them even triumph over the difficult movie medium.

This has been the case since the early days of film. For instance, comic genius **Charlie Chaplin** both acted and directed. Decades later, his modern counterpart, **Woody Allen**, both stars in and megs one film after another.

Biggest names

These days, however, the biggest actor-director names are **Clint Eastwood** and **Mel Gibson**,

Their latest films ("Letter from Iwo Jima," "Flags of Our Fathers," "Apocalypto") are nominated for awards, and do well at the box office as well.

They have a much tougher time directing than acting, but the creative and psychic rewards are much greater when you're in charge of an entire film, rather than just your own performance.

So, stars who want to be complete film artists take a deep breath, hunker down for some really hard work, and turn directors.

Other stars who have done well as directors include **Barbra Streisand**, **John Huston**, **Mel Brooks**, **Danny DeVito**, **Bob Fosse**, **Ron Howard**, **Spike Lee**, **Ida Lupino**, **Sofia Coppola**, **Martin Scorsese**, **Quentin Tarantino**, **Jodie Foster**, **Kenneth Branagh**, **Erich von Stroheim**, **Orson Welles**, **Milos Forman**, **John Cassavetes**, **Terry Gilliam**, **Gene Kelly**, **Buster Keaton**, **John Landis** and **Warren Beatty**.

In RP movies

On the Philippine film front, actor-directors have also been around since the very beginning: Before he became one of the finest directors, **Gerry de Leon** was a doctor and actor.

Rosa Mia was famous for playing a long-suffering mother on the silver screen, and directed quite a number of movies as well. **Gregorio Fernandez**, **Rudy**'s dad, acted before he found himself behind the movie cameras.

Later, even **Nora Aunor**, **Christopher de Leon** and **Vilma Santos** tried their hand at directing (only to decide soon after that they preferred their more placid lives as stars).

These days, it's **Cesar Montano** who's making a name for himself as an actor-director, especially after the critical success that was "Panaghoy Sa Suba." In this month's Metro film festival, he's fielding his latest directorial effort, "Ligalig."

Other Filipino actor-directors include **Laurice Guillen**, **Eddie Garcia**, **Joel Lamangan**, **Behn Cervantes**, **Gina Alajar** and **Michael de Mesa**.

'Chic Eats'

DISCOVERY Travel & Living presents the series "Chic Eats" at 8 p.m. every Friday, starting Jan. 5. The first episode, "Australia: Slow Food," introduces a philosophical approach to food and eating that's the antithesis of fast food. Viewers are invited to a slow food feast hosted by **James Broadway**. Aussie food enthusiasts are responsible for everything on the menu, from the rhubarb to the black pigs to the wine.

Rachel Weisz

ACADEMY award-winning actress **Rachel Weisz** stars in two 2007 year openers—"Eragon" and "The Fountain."

In "Eragon," Weisz provides the voice of the movie's magical dragon named Saphira.

In "The Fountain," Weisz finds herself in a story with the three timelines about a man's (**Hugh Jackman**) eternal struggle to save the woman he loves.

Weisz plays both Isabel, Queen of Spain, and Tommy Creo's ailing wife in the present-day story.

FEEDBACK

Serious entertainment

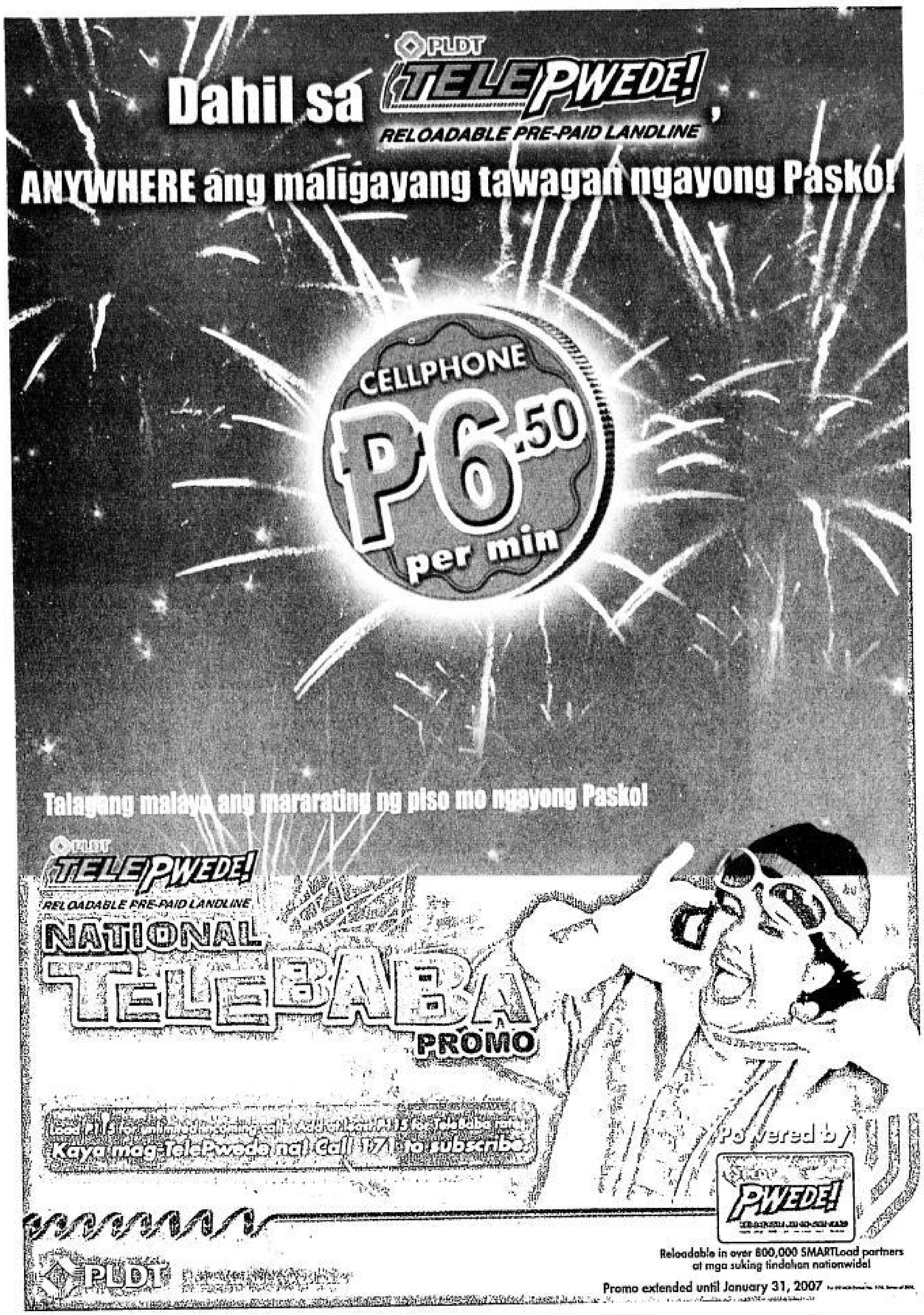
(NAME withheld upon request)
Dear Mr. Nepales,

I used to read the INQUIRER's front page, select OpEd stories, and then the jump pages, in that order. Now I read the front page, some OpEd, you, and then the jump pages. Thank you for bringing hard work and intelligent writing to the Entertainment page.

FROM Ben Hernandez (leoferams@yahoo.com) Phoenix, AZ:

While you're probably happy celebrating your wins, you are doing a great big disservice and [bringing] shame to all Filipinos by filming them in slums, filth and poverty. You won because film people were overwhelmed with what they saw. This is how they will remember [about] the Filipino race. It is sad that you profit from this misery and inadequacy.

(The subject of this observation was not indicated.—Ed.)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BARBRA Streisand sings during the Andre Agassi Grand Slam for Children fundraiser at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas. REUTERS

MICK Jagger (right) and Keith Richards during the Rolling Stones performance at the Super Bowl on Feb. 5 last year in Detroit. AFP

US top concert draws

LOS ANGELES—THE ROLLING STONES were the top concert draw in North America for a second consecutive year, while Barbra Streisand came in at No. 2 with her first major tour in a dozen years, trade publication Pollstar magazine said on Thursday.

The energetic British rockers sold $138.5 million worth of tickets for 39 shows across the United States and Canada. The haul ranks as the third highest on Pollstar's all-time list, behind the Stones' 2005 tour ($162 million), and Irish rock band U2's trek that same year ($138.9 million).

Streisand, hitting the road for her first big tour since 1993-1994, pulled in $92.5 million for just 20 shows, thanks to an average ticket price of $298. By contrast, Stones shows were a relative bargain with an average price of almost $137.

Husband-and-wife country stars Tim McGraw and Faith Hill were No. 3 with $88.8 million for 73 shows. They were followed by Madonna with $85.9 million (34 shows) and the Cirque du Soleil's Delirium tour with $82.1 million (156 shows).

Pollstar said ticket sales for the top 100 shows rose about 13 percent to $2.3 billion, breaking last year's record of $2.1 billion, thanks in part to an eight percent jump in the average ticket price to $61.45 from $56.88. Other costly acts included Madonna, with an average price of almost $184, and the Who with $100. The British veterans, No. 13 on this year's list, charged an average $77 during their last outing in 2002.

The top 100 acts sold a combined 37.9 million tickets, up four percent from 36.3 million last year, but barely changed from 2004's 37.6 million.

Gary Bongiovanni, editor of the Fresno, California-based publication, said it was a "good year overall" for the concert business. "There's definitely a substantial appetite for live music," he said in an interview.

The situation contrasts with the continued sorry state of the recorded music business, where album sales were down about five percent from 2005, according to Nielsen SoundScan data.

As usual, there was not much fresh blood among the top touring acts, many of whom have been around since the 1970s and 1980s. Other veterans included Elton John at No. 10, Billy Joel at No. 11, the Def Leppard and Journey doubleheader at No. 14, Aerosmith and Motley Crue at No. 18, and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young at No. 20.

Only country has succeeded in bringing a whole new generation of acts, including Kenny Chesney (No. 7), Rascal Flatts (No. 12) and Toby Keith (No. 16).

The Stones have not confirmed plans for 2007, but they are expected to return to Europe to make good on summer dates that were scrapped after guitarist Keith Richards and singer Mick Jagger were laid low. Streisand has also talked about taking her show overseas.

But other "oldies" acts will fill the void in North America, among them Rod Stewart and British progressive rock band Genesis, reuniting with Phil Collins. *Reuters*

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"GODFATHER of Soul" in action AP

Why FrancisM mourns James Brown's passing

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS REPORTED FROM New York on Friday:

"Even in death, James Brown can move a crowd.

"Thousands of people danced and sang in the streets outside the Apollo Theater in a raucous celebration Thursday of the music legend's life as his body was displayed on the stage where he made his 1956 debut.

"Music thumped from storefronts and portable stereos. Brown's wails and growls even blasted inside the auditorium as fans marched quietly, single-file past his open gold coffin.

"Brown lay resplendent in a blue suit, white gloves and silver shoes. An arrangement of red flowers on a white background spelled out his nickname: Godfather.

"It was maybe the first time the hardest-working man in show business graced a stage in stillness, but that did not stop his fans from partying.

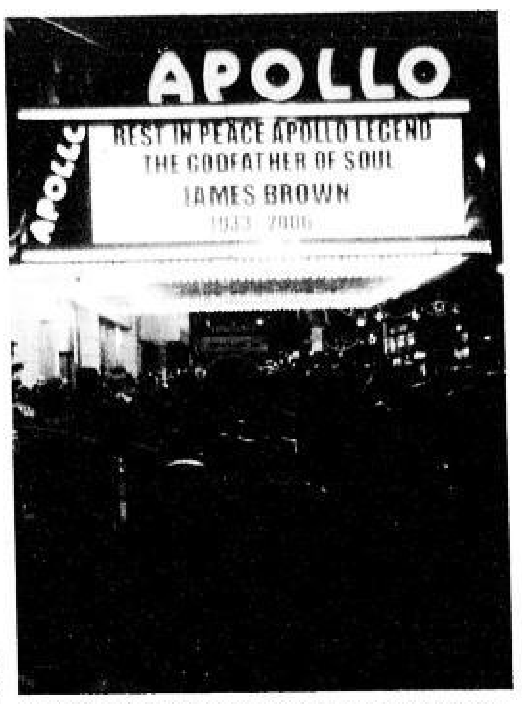
"Brown, who died of heart failure Christmas morning at 73, lay in repose in the theater that helped catapult him to fame and was the setting for a thrilling live album in 1962.

"Earlier, Brown's body was carried to the theater through the streets of Harlem on a majestic white carriage drawn by two white horses.

"Hundreds of fans followed behind the caisson singing the chorus of Brown's anthem, 'Say it Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud.'"

* * *

FLOWERS adorn Brown's statue in his hometown of Augusta, Georgia. AP



FANS wait outside Apollo Theater hoping to get a last glimpse of their idol. AP

I first came across the name of James Brown in 1981. I was a high school senior browsing through the pages of a music almanac at the library. I couldn't yet understand why Brown was referred to as The Hardest Working Man in Show Business, The Original Disco Man, or The Godfather of Soul.

All I knew was that he was black.

Ten years later, Francis Magalona would explain to me the significance of Brown's music to several generations of fans that saw the connection between gospel, R&B, soul, funk, disco and hip hop.

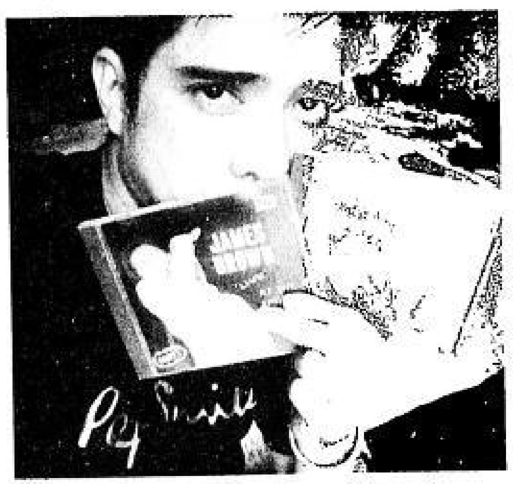
In his former rented house in Katipunan, QC, FrancisM would play James Brown albums, especially a 4-CD box set that traced the singer-songwriter-bandleader-record producer's career that began in the 1950s.

Francis even bought a book that chronicled Brown's roots, from the poor kid who helped his folks in the cotton fields while working on the side as a shoeshine boy, to his rise as an innovative pop music figure and legendary symbol of Afro-American pride.

Signposts

Listening to the CDs, I'd get a kick as Francis mimicked Brown in an emotional ballad called "Please, Please, Please." As the songs played, Francis also took pains pointing out the tracks that not only highlighted Brown's career, but served as signposts of several important genres in contemporary Western music: "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" and "I Got You (I Feel Good)," both of which were Top 10 and No. 1 hits in the pop and R&B charts and have since become standard repertoire of top Pinoy show bands abroad; "Cold Sweat," which critics called the first "true" funk recording; "Say It Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud," which contained socio-political commentary; and "Get Up (I Feel Like Being a Sex Machine)," which featured the debut of future great funk bass player, Bootsy Collins, as part of Brown's backing band, the JBs.

As a rap artist, Francis said he listened hard to Brown because the beats in the latter's songs, often performed by a set of accomplished jazz and big band musicians, were openly acknowledged as the most "sampled" in hip hop. Among these tracks were "Funky Drummer," "Give It Up (Or Turnit A Loose)" and Francis' top favorite, "The Payback."



"HE was an inspiration," says FrancisM.

Two days after Brown's death on Christmas Day 2006, I spoke to Francis by phone and asked him to recount what the man really meant to him. Not content with our conversation, he sent the following text message:

"James Brown was not only a music icon and legend. He was an inspiration to me. The Godfather of Soul was [truly] the Hardest Working Man in the Biz and I myself try to stay in that mind-set. I work six days a week, till the wee hours. I do two to three gigs a week, *'lagare'* in local show biz parlance. I was in a gig in Cubao on the day he died.

"Brown's influence is so great that I have written songs patterned after his own material: 'Wannabe Me' (1986); 'Meron Akong Ano' (1992); and 'Old Man' (1995). I have a lot of favorite JBs— 'Super Bad,' 'Gonna Have a Funky Good Time,' 'Papa's Got a Brand New Bag,' 'Sex Machine' and 'Try Me.'

"To undermine his influence and contributions not only in hip hop and R&B, but in pop music as a whole, would be a crime. James Brown is Soul [music]. He invented Funk. He was good on wax, tape, but even better live. I love James Brown! I'd get his autograph before Elvis' or Lennon's, if the three were together in a room.

"Without James Brown, there would be no Steveland Morris (a.k.a. Stevie Wonder), no Michael Jackson, no Prince, no MC Hammer, no Usher... the list goes on."

As I write, an archival footage of James Brown is on at You Tube. Watching JB's frenetic footwork while singing "I Feel Good," I fully understood what FrancisM meant.

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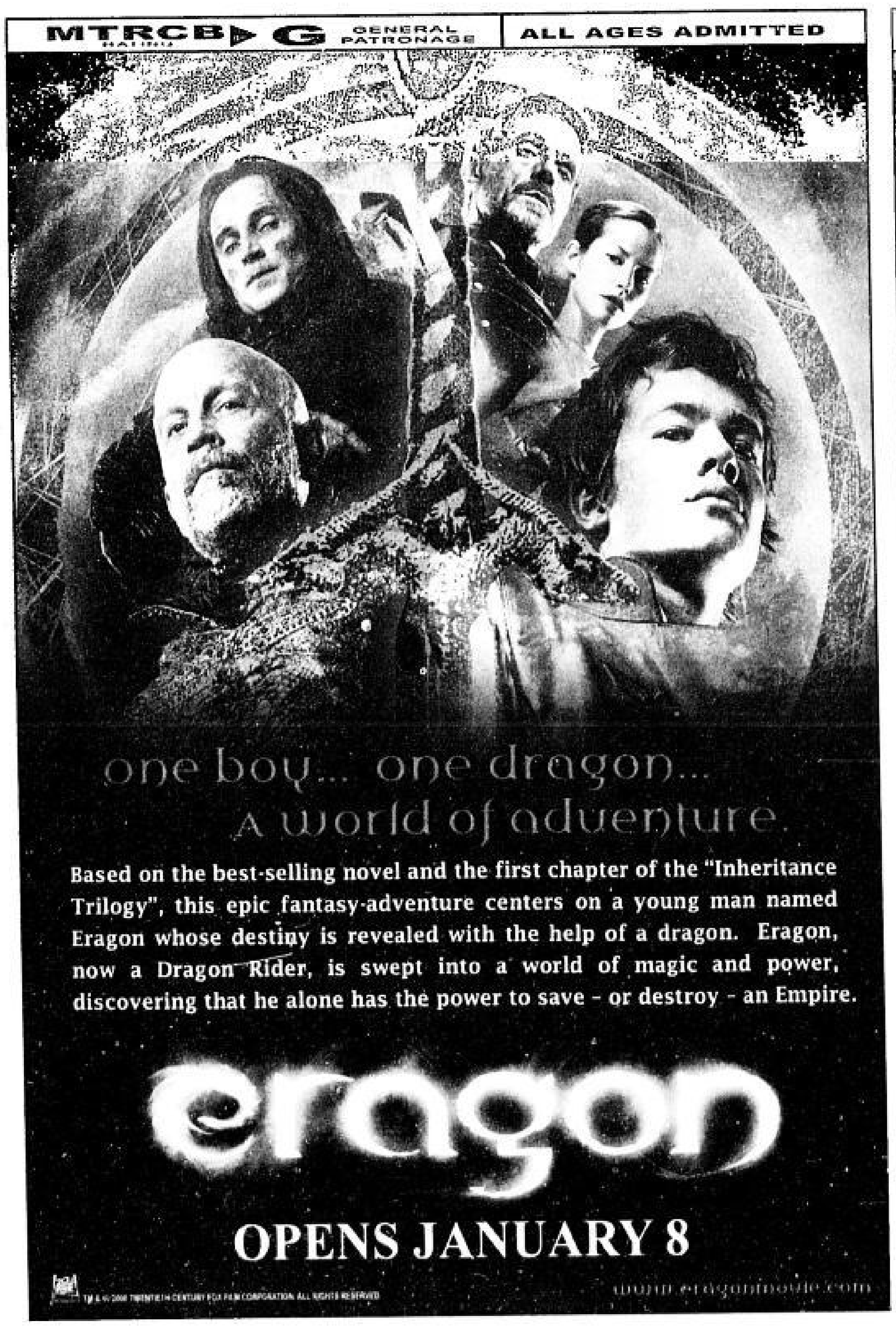
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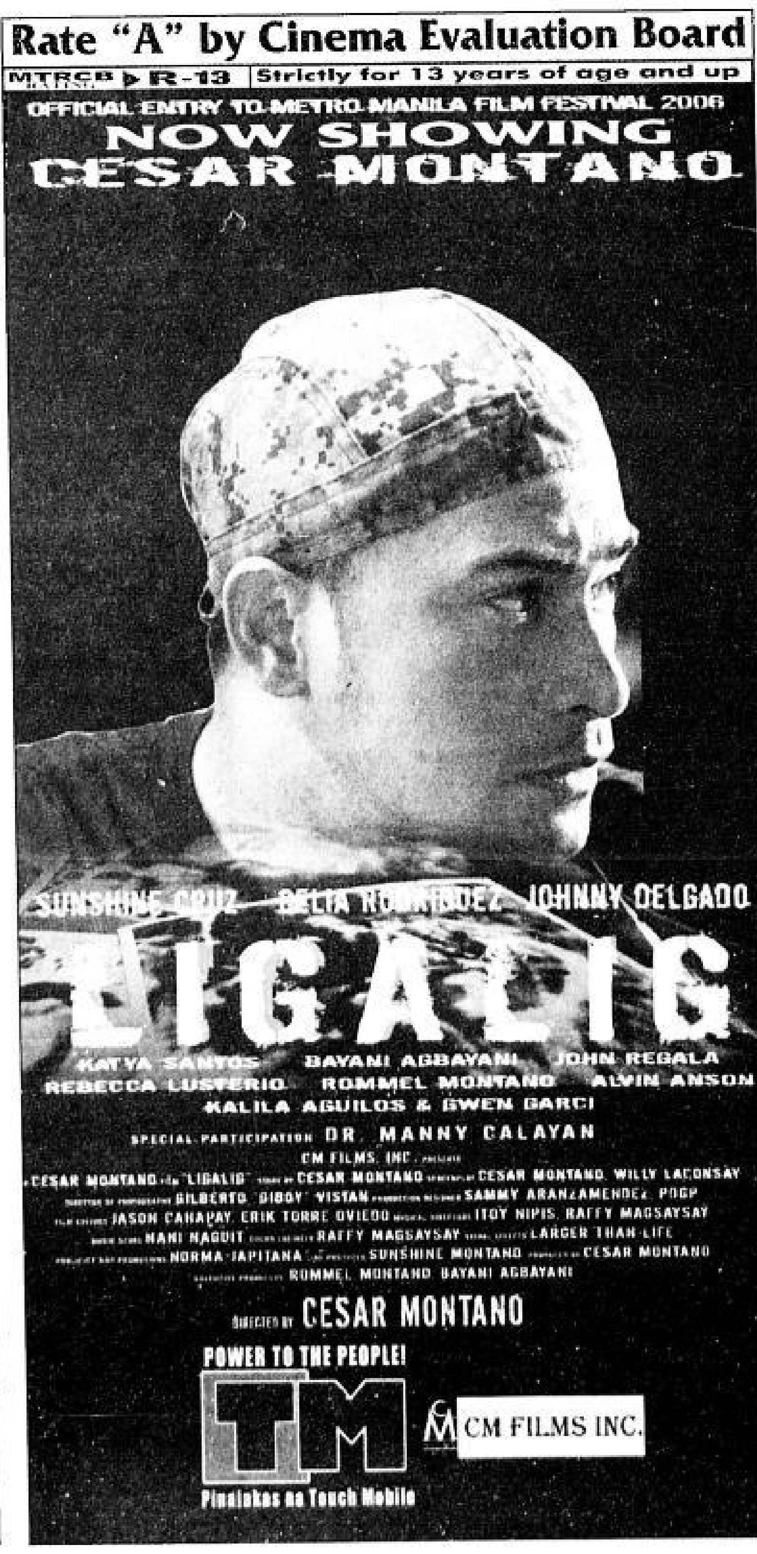
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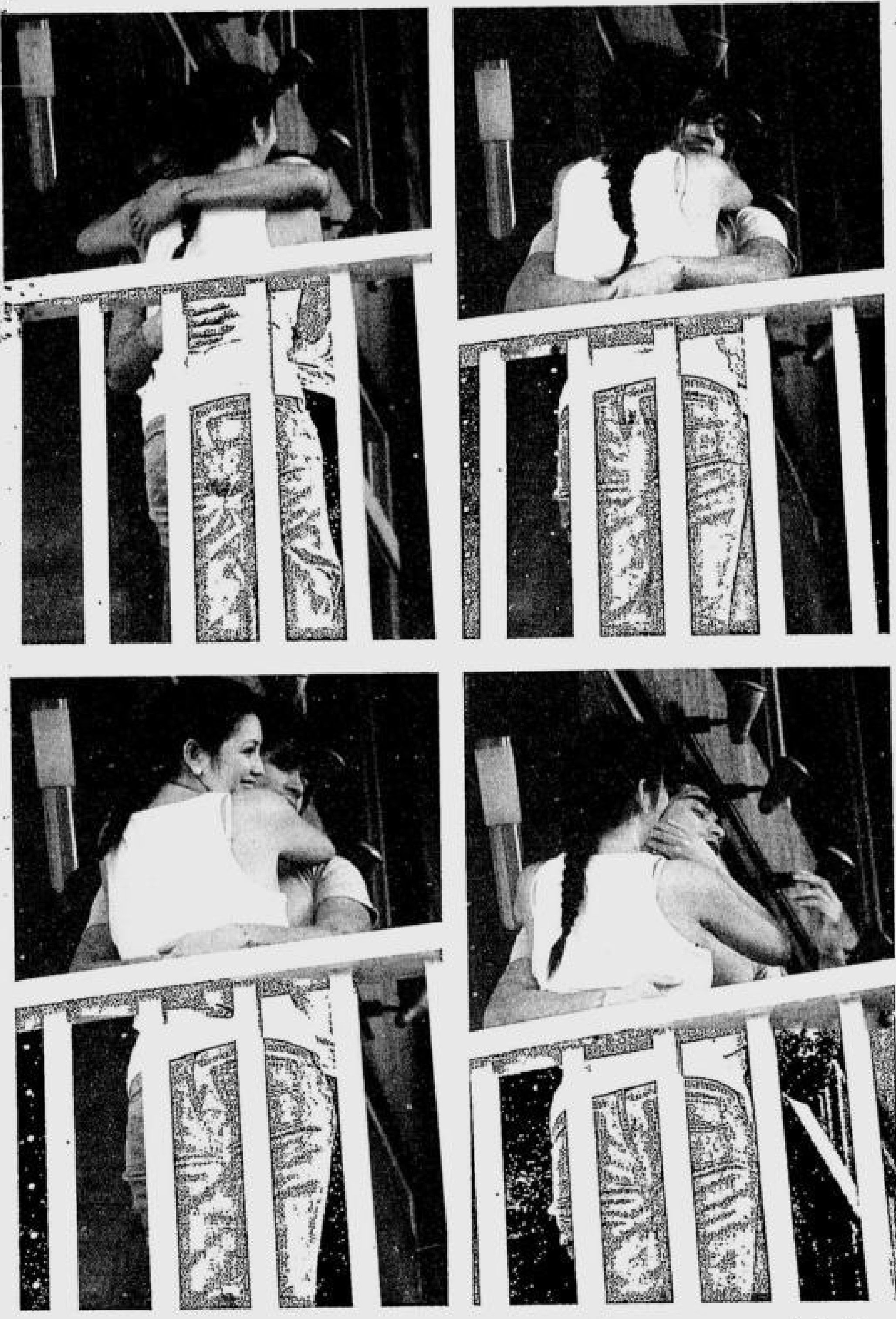

STILL WE WONDERED. Of course we knew the photo op in July was to promote the Robin Padilla-Regine Velasquez starrer, "Till I Met You" (released in November). But doesn't this look like the real thing?

RUDY ESPERAS

A Pinay star off Broadway

By Cora Lucas
Photos by Edwin Bacasmas

SHE MAY HAVE broken the hearts of those who have grown to love her song-and-dance numbers in that '90s youth-oriented show, but Marie-France Noelle Arcilla had to move on to conquer a different audience.

Marie-France who?

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2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
3 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8	1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50
4 MANO PO 5	12.00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00
6 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA	1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
7 ZSA ZSA ZATURRNAH	12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
8 SUPER NOYPI	12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
9 TATLONG BARAHA	1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50
10 LIGALIG	1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00

ERMITA
638-7809 to 12

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	10:10 12:35 3:00 5:25 7:45 10:00
2 LIGALIG	10:20 12.25 2:50 5:05 7:25 9:50
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5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA	10.30 12:25 2:20 4:15 6:10 8:05 10:00
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00
7 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8	10:30 1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50

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1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9.10
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	11:25 1:55 4:25 6:55 9:20
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4 SUPER NOYPI	11:20 1:40 4:00 6:30 9:00
5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA	10.50 12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00
6 MANO PO 5	10:20 1:00 3:40 6:20 9:00
7 LIGALIG	12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00
8 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8	10:40 1:20 4.00 6:40 9:10

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1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
2 SUPER NOYPI
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
5 MANO PO 5
6 ZSA ZSA ZATURRNAH
7 LIGALIG
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

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2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 RESERVE
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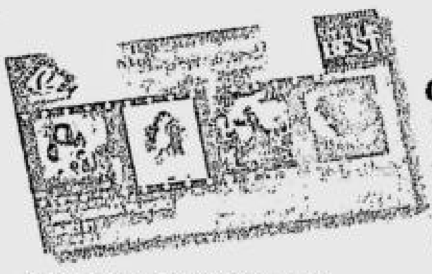

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4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
5 THE NATIVITY STORY
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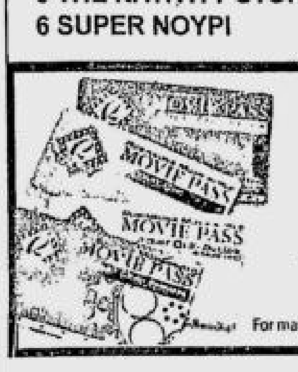
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8



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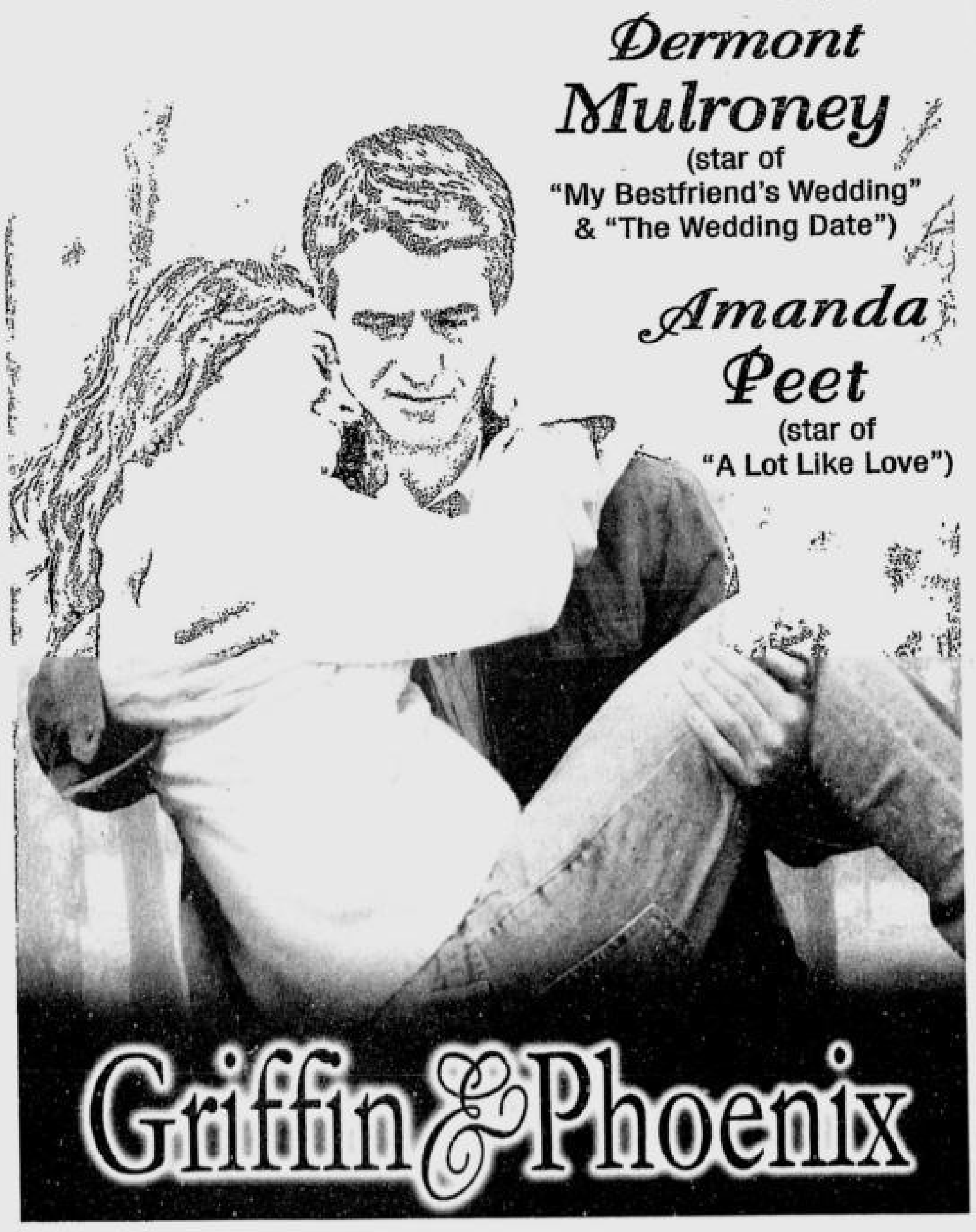
Dermont Mulroney
(star of "My Bestfriend's Wedding" & "The Wedding Date")
Amanda Peet
(star of "A Lot Like Love")
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A Pinay sta off Broadw

From page F1

"I almost feel like I have to reintroduce myself here," says Marie-France, better known as Marnie of the first batch of "Ang TV," the ABS-CBN show that launched the careers of Jolina Magdangal, Angelu de Leon, Claudine Barretto, Carlo Aquino, Victor Neri and Camille Prats. "I joined the show when I was 11—I was there for seven years. Then I left to get a 'real' career."

She needs reintroduction to the biz herself, she agrees, especially after she saw an actress batch mate posing "half-naked" on FHM. She bursts: "My God, what happened? I don't know these people anymore."

It was not so much boredom as uncertainty that drove Marie-France to try something more stable. Sure, she was on her way to a flourishing show biz career, being a semi-regular on the now defunct noontime show "Sa Linggo nAPO Sila," a model of a shampoo commercial with a long-running campaign and a favorite guest of her network's prime time shows. But she says the lure of a regular, permanent job was just so compelling she had to take the risk.

"Everyone was telling me, 'You have to get a real career. You're not going to be pretty for very long'," she explains.

So she left her comfort zone, finished her degree in Management of Communication Technology at the Ateneo and got a job at the Alliance Française doing special events. While she was there, she got an offer to go to Canada to work for the Federal department responsible for health maintenance. There, she was tasked to do embryonic stem cell research, a seemingly complicated-sounding job that she says simply involves "data gathering and public speaking."

She settled in Ottawa, Canada, which is notable for establishments closing at 9 p.m.

"I had nothing to do on weekends," Marie-France recalls. "I started going to New York and visiting my friends. And then they said, '*Dito ka na lang.*'"

First breaks

But she decided to go back to Canada, where work and life were more or less steady. One winter, while walking down the street, she saw a sign on an electric post that read, "Lion King. Open Auditions."

She got to the audition venue, clueless of the standard requirements that included a 8x10 head shot, taped music and bio. She was allowed to try out for a role and even sing "Unbreak My Heart" without the required accompaniment. To her surprise, she got called back for the succeeding auditions.

When she got to the finals, she was sent to New York for what was considered the final test. Unfortunately, she was eventually rejected; the casting agents said she wasn't ready.

"I cried and cried. I didn't leave my apartment for three days," she recalls. "My friends came with flowers and food because I wasn't eating. And they said, 'It's okay. We still love you. We think you're talented.' And then I realized that I had no training but they flew me to New York. Maybe this is something I can really do for the rest of my life."

She moved to New York and attended the American Musical and Dramatic Academy, a school for the performing arts in Manhattan. After finishing her theater training, she immediately got the role of Kim in "Miss Saigon," which was staged at the Forestburgh Playhouse in upstate New York.

"That was my first role and they offered me my equity card," she recounts. "The Actor's Equity is a union. I can't be in Broadway unless I'm part of the union. It's like saying, 'I'm a professional actor now'."

Tough tryouts

"Miss Saigon" turned out to be the icebreaker. The past two years for Marie-France were largely spent blocking, memorizing lines and getting into a character in musical theater.

Marie-France remembers that the auditions she had to go through each time were really tough. First, she had to face a casting associate and a casting director. The screening panel in-

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THE "Ang TV" kid grows up. EDWIN BACASMAS

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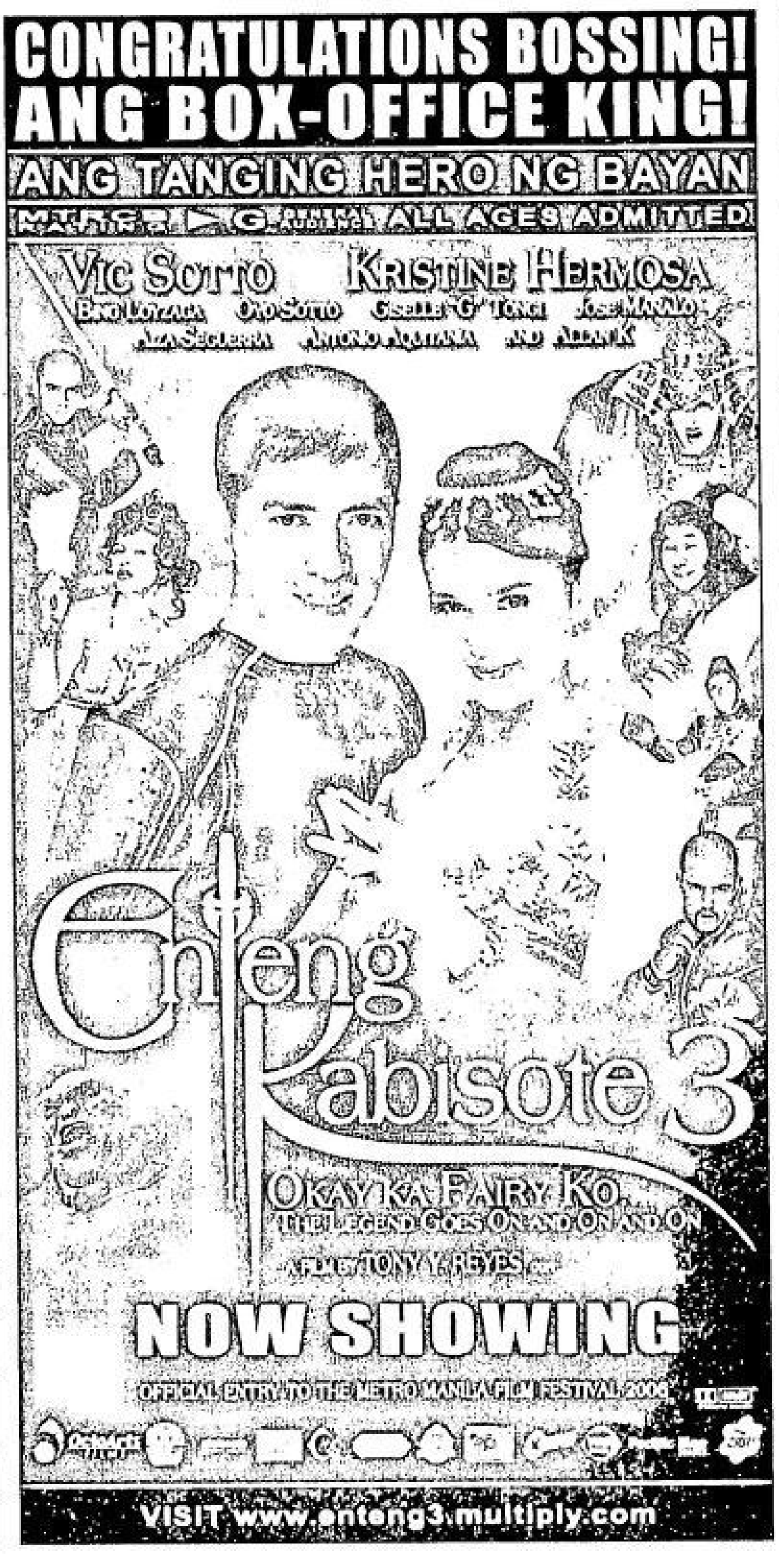

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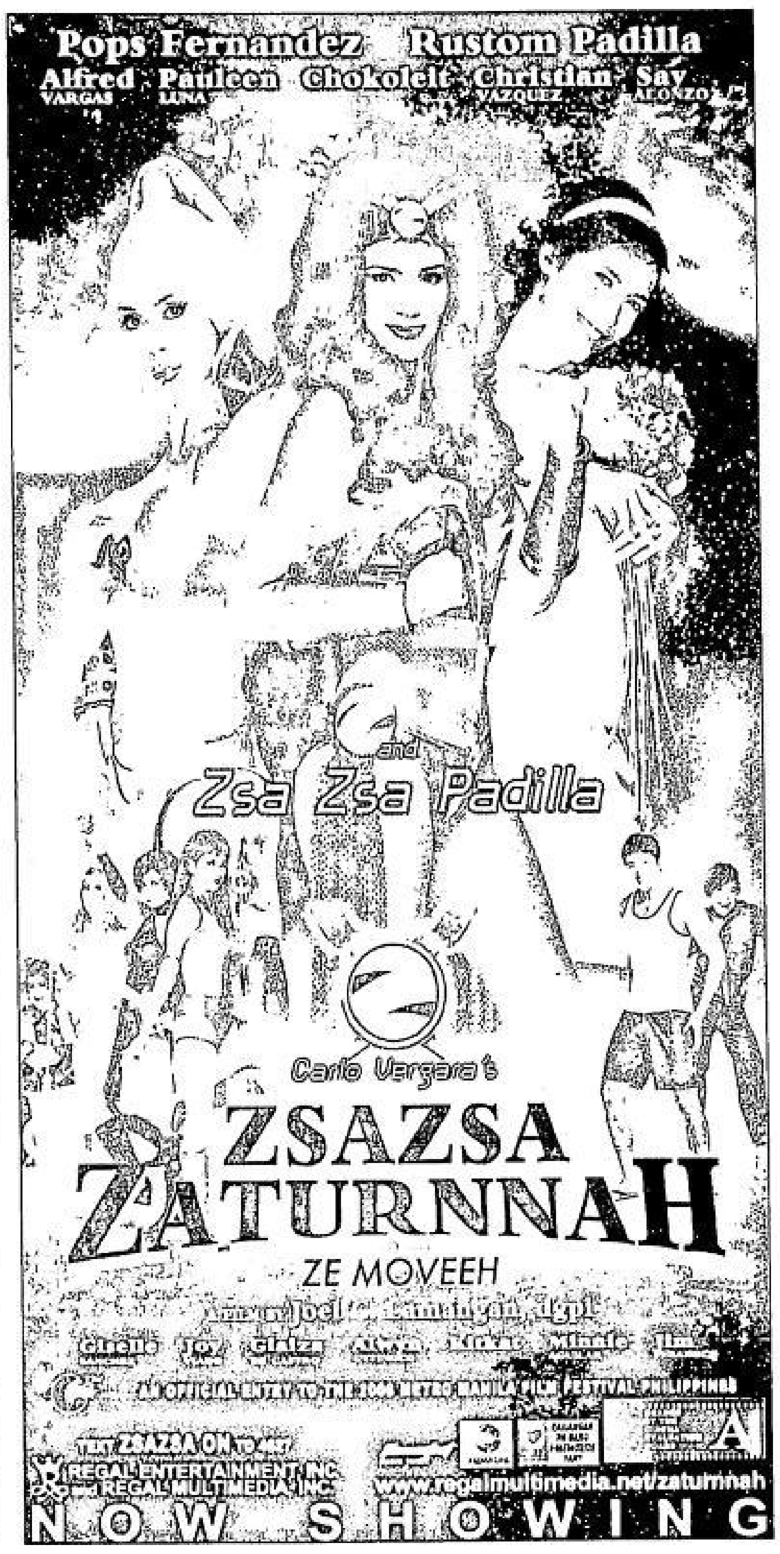

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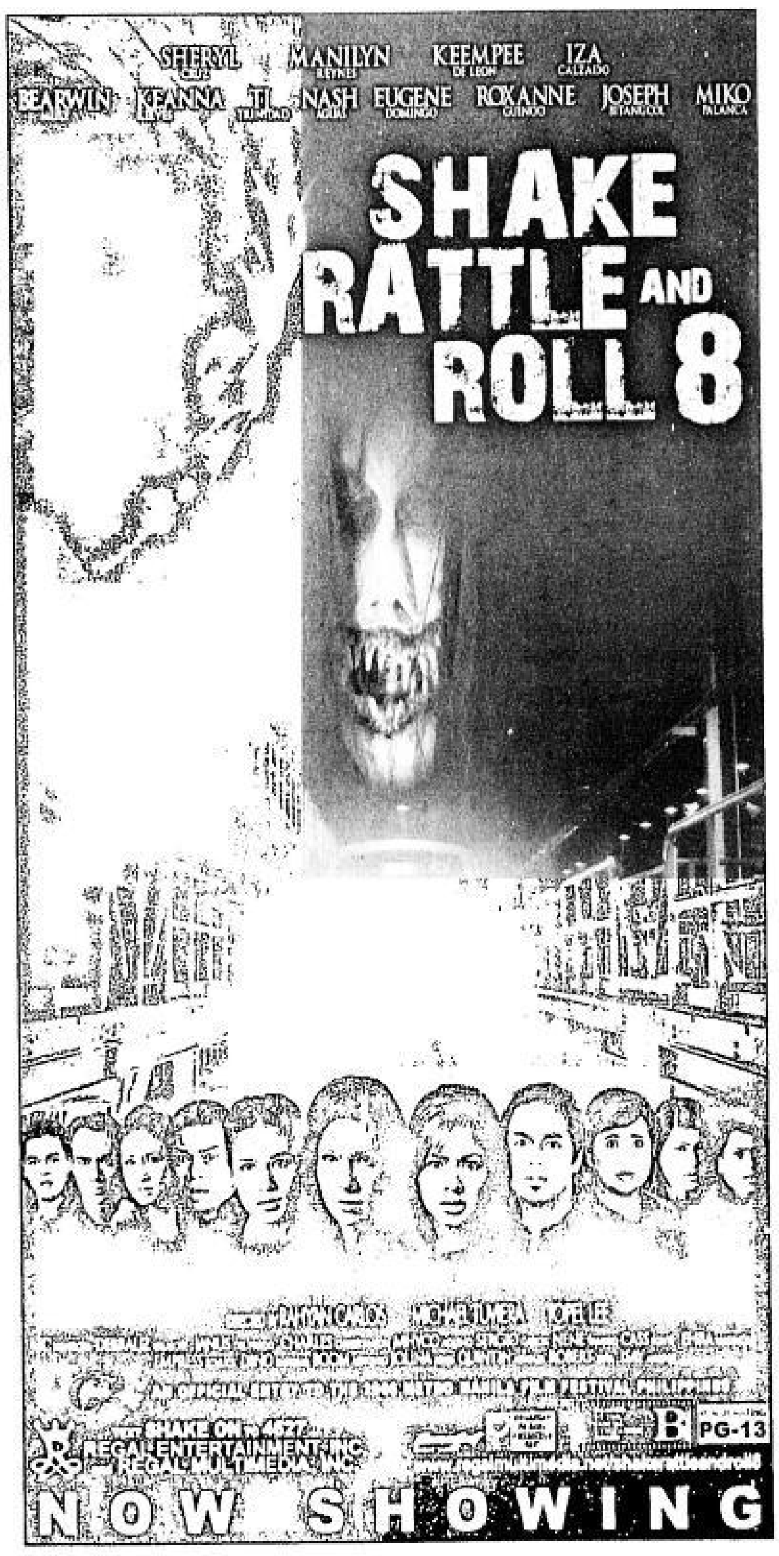

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SHE SINGS, dances and acts in "Shout! The Mod Musical," left (in blue costume).

MARIE-France Arcilla, home for the holidays.
EDWIN BACASMAS

A Pinay star off Broadway

From page F2

creased as the auditions wore on, until she had to face four producers, two writers, a director and a musical director on one audition.

She particularly remembers the auditions for the off-Broadway musical "Shout! The Mod Musical" which, then unknown to her, was directed by her musical teacher Phillip George.

"There's nothing harder than auditioning for someone who taught me everything I know," she says. "In the middle of my song, he started laughing. It was such a bad sign. But it turned out he liked it. He was just laughing because he was proud of me. He cast me!"

Her off-Broadway performances include "Aida" (Amneris), "Making Tracks" (Dottie/Grace), "Company" (April), "Fame" (Carmen), "Oliver" (Nancy), "Once Upon and Ever After" (Dulcetta/Fierce), The Songbook Series, "Rings" (Maria), "The Box" (Narrator), "The White Rose" (Traute) and "The Ark" (Martha).

Marie-France explains that off-Broadway plays or musicals, although staged in smaller theaters than Broadway productions, are not necessarily small shows. She says the very first big show she did—a 21st century take on the classic story of Noah's ark—was off-Broadway.

"The Ark" was staged in the 399-seat 37 Arts Theater, with a set that cost $850,000. It also had big names in the cast, like Annie Golden of the '70s movie musical "Hair" and Adrian Zmed of the TV series "TJ Hooker."

"A lot of shows on Broadway started off-Broadway," says Marie-France, noting the successful Broadway staging of "Rent," which was later adapted to the big screen. "My latest show, 'Shout!,' has Broadway aspirations. We're waiting to hear what's going to happen.

"Shout!" is a 1960s-inspired musical that follows five women as they come of age. Marie-France plays the woman identified only as Blue.

Rave reviews

The musical that played for 163 regular performances at the Julia Miles Theater in New York got such rave reviews that a Broadway staging is believed to be in order.

Marie-France, who is on a three-week vacation from work, is now based in New York and lives alone in Little Italy, a neighborhood where, she says, Italy and Chinatown collide. "On one street the Chinese people are screaming at each other in Chinese. Across the street, there's a guy pulling mozzarella by hand."

She has yet to do her dream role—that of the ugly Fosca in the James Lapine and Stephen Sondheim musical "Passion." She also wants to conquer the local stage, after doing a few plays for Actor's Actors Inc., Dulaang UP, Tanghalang Ateneo, Koine Theater Foundation and Atlantis Productions.

When she's not on stage, Marie-France hosts "Cinema AZN," a weekly half-hour program broadcast on AZN Television, which is the network's answer to "E!" She's proud to have guested Filipino celebrities on the show, like actors Cesar Montano and Ricky Davao and director Marilou Diaz-Abaya.

She has recently hired an agent, which now keeps her from literally going out and looking for the next job.

"It has made life a lot easier," she says. "I have a lot of shows in the works."

THE OFF-Broadway star has Broadway aspirations.
EDWIN BACASMAS

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